



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



# **Quality Review Report**

**The Williamsbridge School**

**Public School 89**

**980 Mace Avenue  
Bronx  
NY 10469**

**Principal: Ronald Rivera**

**Dates of review: May 10 - 14, 2007**

**Reviewer: Stephen Walker**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The Williamsbridge School (PS 89) is a large elementary and middle school of 1,330 students, kindergarten through grade 8. It is located in the Williamsbridge community of Bronx. The school is housed in a four-story building which was built in 1927. The school building is presently being extensively refurbished. The school population consists of a rich mixture of cultures with 45% Hispanic, 35% Black and 15% White. Over 10% of the students are recent arrivals from all over the world particularly Albania, Mexico and Pakistan. More than 26 languages other than English are represented in the school. English language learners comprise 19% of the school population and special education students account for 11%. The school is Title 1 eligible with 80% of students qualifying, which is significantly higher than similar schools and the City average. Attendance at 90%, is slightly below that of similar and City schools.

The Williamsbridge School was approved as an empowerment school in 2006. Empowerment Schools have more flexibility to make key decisions and control the resources for their school community. Empowerment schools are free to develop or purchase professional development services, chose which schools to affiliate with, and benefit from reduced reporting and paper work requirements.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The school is well developed in using assessment data in order to monitor and improve student performance.
- The school is successful in increasing the progress of all students including English language learners and special education students.
- The school is welcoming to students and parents, supported by committed teams of teachers and support staff.
- The majority of teaching actively engages students and many teachers demonstrate good practice.
- The principal provides collaborative and reflective school leadership and his enabling approach encourages all staff to adopt very positive attitudes to their work.
- Intervention services are very well managed and give targeted support for students who require additional help.
- There are good systems of guidance delivered by informed personnel which support the performance and personal development of students.
- The school works closely with parents who greatly value the work of the school.
- There is a well-established program of professional development for teachers that is clearly focused on accelerating student progress.
- The school is continually evaluating its performance and seeking new ways to improve the learning and progress of the students.

### What the school needs to improve

- Further analyze and use assessment information about gender and similar schools to moderate planning and accelerate the success of all students.
- Further develop a system based on previous performance data, to improve the setting of clear and measurable goals for individual students and classes.
- Introduce more regular monitoring of the Comprehensive Education Plan by the cabinet, subject leaders and leadership team.
- Develop training opportunities for experienced teachers, paraprofessionals and school aides in order to increase their effectiveness in the school.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This is a well-developed school.**

The school is well developed in using assessment data in order to monitor and improve student performance. The performance of all groups of students demonstrates a raising trend over the last four years. Detailed records are kept on individual students for each of the subject areas and intervention services quickly identify students who require additional help with their work. The school acknowledges that it could further develop the setting of clearer, measurable goals for other individual students and classes. Improvements in performance have increased the popularity of the school and this has led to some problems of overcrowding and large classes particularly in the middle school. Regular evaluations provide clear information on the progress of students. Students enjoy the lessons and teachers are increasingly using assessment information to plan and differentiate their instruction. The principal provides supportive and collaborative leadership that has positively impacted on the work of the teachers and the general improvements in the school. The school adopts a proactive approach to school improvement and is continually looking at better ways to improve the progress and success of students. It has identified more regular monitoring of whole school plans as an important area for development.

### 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 well developed.**

The school uses assessment data very well to track the progress of individual and groups of students. It is actively using this information to inform intervention, instruction and student groupings. The administrators analyze, in detail, the differences in subject areas and between classes and grades. The school focuses successfully on raising the performance of the students in State and City standardized assessments. The percentage of students gaining levels 3 or 4 in English language arts and mathematics shows a significant improvement in the current year's progress report.

Assessment information in English language arts and mathematics is collected for each student and class through the computerized Student Assessment Management Systems. Running records and conferencing are supplemented by other formal testing and unit tests in mathematics. Teachers update the records on a monthly basis including details of all interventions. Records for science and social studies are not yet included in this system. The school has used the present State report card to generate its own data to project performance and progress goals for the next three years. Detailed low inference observations of individual students identify key behavior patterns of low performing students. The school does not at moment compare its results with other empowerment schools or fully analyze gender differences across subject areas.

There are very good systems to record the performance and progress of English language learners and special education students. All intervention programs screen students using reading and mathematics assessments in order to address the needs of level 1 and 2 students. Higher attaining students are identified by the academic intervention services. The detailed analysis of differences in performance and participation of ethnic groups leads to additional support for Hispanic and Black students.

**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 well developed.**

There are clear, measurable goals for increasing the number of students who gain level 3 and 4 in English language arts and mathematics in 2007. The assistant principals meet regularly with grade teams and individual teachers to discuss student progress and variations in progress between classes. Conferencing provides opportunities for teachers to set general goals for students and explain how they can improve their work. However, measurable goals based on previous performance are not always specific for individual students or classes.

The academic intervention team meets once a week and quickly identifies students who require additional help with their work. Students are supported through ‘push in and pull out’ teachers in each grade in order to address their individual learning needs. A growing number of potential referrals and transferred students require support with mathematics and reading particularly in the higher grades. There is an extensive after school program for at risk students that is organized by a number of community based organizations. The early morning school provides mandated support for all level 1 and 2 students. The main partners in intervention meet regularly as a pupil personnel team, in order to review the success of the support strategies.

The school works closely with parents and caregivers who greatly value the work of the school. Communication with the parents is good and this supports student achievement. The school is beginning to gain assistance with the translation of school letters to the large number of non-English speaking parents. Parents and caregivers are provided with regular progress reports that are detailed and informative. Attendance at parent-teacher conferences is improving and parents are alerted quickly if their child is having learning difficulties. Goals and plans for improving student performance and progress are at the heart of the school as all members of the school believe that all students can experience success.

**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.**

Curriculum programs meet mandatory requirements and provide student progress information through regular evaluations. In addition, teachers in kindergarten through grade 3 use appropriate assessments whilst students in grades 3 through 8 are given the monthly Princeton review assessments. A wide range of highly relevant programs have

been introduced to meet the needs of self contained groups of English language learners and Special Education students. An imaginative arts program provides additional enrichment in dance, drama and visual arts in grades 4 through 6. Teachers use assessment information well particularly in the early grades to plan and differentiate their instruction. Groups within classes are carefully organized based on the skills of the students. Differentiation of activities according to abilities is proving more challenging in the middle school particularly in mathematics. Teachers are accountable to the assistant principals for the standard of teaching and performance outcomes of their students.

The assignment of teachers and the scheduling of classes are clearly guided by the drive to improve student performance. Each teacher in the early grades has a 'flow of the day' work plan that ensures a balanced program of subjects for each class. Budgeting decisions are clearly focused on improving students' performance. For example, SINI funding is targeted on providing intervention teachers for each grade as well as a summer program for kindergarten through grade 2.

The majority of teaching actively engages students and many teachers demonstrate very good practice. Teachers are using the workshop model well to promote active learning in lessons. The high quality display of students' work provides a stimulating environment for learning in most classrooms. Students enjoy the lessons and really appreciate the imaginative and lively approaches of their teachers. There are opportunities to develop further the provision and use of technology as a tool for teaching and learning.

There are very effective systems of guidance by personnel who support the academic performance and personal development of students. Students speak highly of the support and guidance from teachers and councilors. Improvements in attendance reflect highly on the family worker and guidance councilor who carefully monitor and follow up all absences.

**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.**

The principal provides supportive and reflective school leadership and parents, staff and students greatly respect his commitment and focused vision for the school. The school has a 'welcoming family feel' and the collaborative and enabling approach of the principal encourages staff to adopt very positive attitudes to their work. He is well supported by a very effective cabinet team including assistant principals who facilitate improvements in the school.

Staff are selected on their potential to improve student performance. The quality of recent appointments is high and all new teachers are required to undertake a demonstration lesson. There is a developing program of professional development that is clearly focused on improving student progress. A variety of workshops provide opportunities for staff training thorough the grade conference meetings. New teachers receive good quality ongoing support through coaching and mentoring. The school is aware that professional development does not always challenge and extend the more experienced teachers. The mathematics and literacy coaches as well as consultants provide excellent support for teachers with planning and instruction. Insufficient training opportunities are currently made for paraprofessionals and school aides to increase their effectiveness in the classrooms and the school.

Lesson observations are well established in the school and all teachers have a formal observation by the principal or assistant principals with developmental feedback at least twice a year. Some teachers have developed inter-visitations with their colleagues in order to share good classroom practice. Various teams in the school including the cabinet, pupil personnel team and school safety committee meet regularly to evaluate and review plans. Despite overcrowding, the school runs relatively smoothly on a day- to- day basis because expectations and procedures are clear and reasonable. Supervision in the corridors on the upper floor is sometimes inadequate particularly during the change of lessons. The cleanliness of the school stairways and toilets is sometimes unsatisfactory.

The school is well supported by a number of outside bodies such as J.P. Morgan Chase and the Lincoln Center who provide valuable personnel and materials to enhance the school programs. Local community and commercial contributions recently replaced all the stolen computer hardware.

**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 well developed.**

There are clear expectations for all teachers on student goals, planning of work and recording of performance data. The principal and assistant principals regularly scrutinize the student progress data across all teaching groups and grades. There is a well-defined assessment program throughout the school so that individual student progress can be monitored and evaluated. Students who need extra support are carefully identified and intervention strategies are quickly implemented. Teachers use regular assessments to adapt their teaching plans and groupings. Grade meetings provide opportunities for all teachers to contribute to developments and take a full part in evaluation and planning. Intervention strategies are regularly monitored in order to evaluate the effectiveness of support strategies for students at risk. The pupil personal team meets weekly to discuss individual students whilst the cabinet completes a detailed analysis of the relative success of intervention strategies. There are clear priorities, targets and well defined success criteria within the Comprehensive Education Plan which are agreed and shared with the subject teams. The plan is based on student progress and it provides an impressive working document for whole school improvement. However, the plan is not regularly monitored by the cabinet, subject teams or leadership team. The school leadership team has a good understanding of the plan but their role is not fully publicized to a significant number of parents.

The school is continually reviewing progress and adjusting strategies. For example, the school now provides discrete English language learner classes rather than bilingual classes in order to support the new arrivals with a home language other than English and Spanish. An effective reading program is now delivered in grades 1 through 2 due to its proven success in the kindergarten. The school adopts a very reflective approach to school improvement and is continually looking at the best ways to accelerate student progress and success.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: The Williamsbridge School (PS 89)</b>	∅	✓	+
<b>Quality Score</b>			<b>X</b>

<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>			<b>X</b>
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>			<b>X</b>
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>			<b>X</b>
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.		<b>X</b>	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>			<b>X</b>

\* 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.		<b>X</b>	
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.			<b>X</b>
2.3 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.			<b>X</b>
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.			<b>X</b>
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.			<b>X</b>
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>			<b>X</b>

<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