



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

De Witt Clinton High School

High School 440

**100 W Mosholu Parkway
Bronx
NY 10468**

Principal: Geraldine Ambrosio

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Reviewers: Susan Jackson and Peter Friend

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

De Witt Clinton is a very large high school located in the Bronx, serving students from grades 9 through 12. There are currently 4,343 students enrolled, 66% of whom are Hispanic, 26% Black, 6% Asian, 3% White and 0.5% American Indian. The school has 479 special education students, representing 11% of the student population. Numbering 772, English language learners make up 17% of the students. Attendance is broadly in line with City schools at 82.5%. The school received Title 1 funding for 72% of its students this year. As a reflection of its size, the school offers on-site medical, dental and child-care support facilities.

De Witt Clinton was founded in 1897 and moved from Manhattan to its present site in 1929. It is one of the last traditional high schools left in New York City. In 2003, De Witt Clinton was recognized by the National Association of Secondary School Principals as a *Breakthrough High School*. In 1999, the school was cited as one of the outstanding high schools in the United States by *US News and World Report*.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal is an effective leader and highly regarded by parents, staff and students.
- Senior leaders collaborate well to develop the school and bring about change.
- The work of the coaches, in particular the full time literacy consultant, is doing much to improve the knowledge and understanding of teachers in the school.
- The principal and the school cabinet have successfully targeted students in the greatest need of improvement.
- In spite of its size, the school works well with individual students and aims to bring out the strengths in every student.
- The school builds a strong sense of corporate identity among students who attend school regularly.
- The recent creation of the small learning communities has gone some way to offset the drawbacks inherent in the school's size, by offering the students the opportunity to belong to more personalized and cohesive units.
- Professional development is driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the intention of improving student performance.
- The school participates in a range of effective partnerships and has strong and productive links with its alumni.
- The school offers a broad range of extra-curricular activities and helps students to develop their interests and skills.

What the school needs to improve

- Continue to develop strategies to improve punctuality and attendance.
- Continue to improve the quality of instruction in order to ensure that all students are actively engaged.
- Ensure that all teachers use data in order to match their teaching with the needs of individual students.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

Parents, students and staff are proud to belong to De Witt Clinton. The school has a distinctive history which touches the daily life of the community. Well above average in size, the school works hard to create a supportive environment where individual students are valued and can learn effectively. The very wide range of after-school clubs, sports teams, enrichment activities and optional programs, enables students to enhance their potential, both academically and socially. The school makes good use of data and has a range of initiatives in place to ensure that the performance of individual students is tracked closely.

The principal leads the school well. Her positive, collaborative approach is mirrored in the effective teamwork of the cabinet. Planning is thoughtful and the school has a clear set of goals, which are focused on raising the prospects of all students. Even though the school finds it difficult to bring large groups of teachers together for planning purposes, staff are encouraged to work more collaboratively and to draw upon a range of strategies to improve their teaching and the quality of student learning.

In conjunction with its alumni, the school prides itself on its success in securing grants to improve teaching and learning, and in obtaining scholarships for its students. Recent grants have supported the establishment of small learning communities. Graduates are successful in gaining places at prestigious universities and many follow competitive and demanding 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 gathers a range of quantitative and qualitative data which gives a comprehensive picture of student performance. The school has a clear view of how well students perform in City and State tests with comparisons over years and cohorts. Differences in performance are examined and explained, for instance changes in performance in different years, grade levels, and differences between ethnic groups. This is reinforced by the work undertaken by groups of teachers in assessing how effectively students are undertaking their classes. Teachers use a combination of formative and summative assessment and disseminate feedback sheets to students at the end of each term.

A strength of the school lies in the analysis of performance and diagnostic data to interrogate underperformance by individual students or particular groups. The identification of the performance of English language learners and special education students in comparison with similar schools has led to the reassessment of the skills required by these students. The school's focus has been particularly successful in literacy.

Curricula and teaching strategies have been adjusted for students with low literacy levels and interim results show that progress is being made.

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.

Teachers are familiar with the school’s clearly defined set of goals which focus on the school as a whole, on academic subjects, classrooms, grade levels and on groups of students. Currently English language learners and special education students are being targeted for support in City and State tests. Students in Grade 12 are also receiving extra support to improve graduation rates.

The needs of English language learners and special education students are particularly well identified. For these students, programs of remediation, focused instructional strategies and adjustments to curricula all help to set reachable goals. Consequently, the work is often appropriate to their needs and good progress is made.

The analysis of data has led to closer identification of the literacy and study skills needed by students to succeed in their work and assignments. Case conferences and other meetings of staff generate progress reports and result in the setting of further goals for improvement. This, in turn, informs teachers’ planning so that instruction can be more clearly aligned to the needs of students. Guidance for parents is provided to involve them in knowing what their children are doing, and report cards are sent home six times a year. High expectations are conveyed to parents and students in all school communications.

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.

This area of the school’s work is proficient.

The school follows the mandated curriculum but offers additional courses such as the Macy Einstein science classes and the New York University Now program to promote critical thinking. The school also runs 15 advanced placement courses and uses data from the Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test to identify students that have the potential to succeed at this level. This year 726 students are enrolled on advanced placement courses. In 2005 -2006, 90 % of the 685 students enrolled passed advanced placement courses. The school ensures that teachers include the skills needed to succeed at advanced placement in the core curriculum.

The school uses data and the annual Comprehensive Education Plan to align instruction. All staff are engaged in writing and reviewing units of work in the light of student outcomes. When the Regent results in English language arts indicated that some students’ performance was marred by poor writing skills, this specific need was immediately incorporated into instructional programs. Based on the analysis of data, a series of programs have been introduced for students at risk of under-performing. The programs offer students additional adult support and counseling.

School leaders have also found that students need specific support in learning how to study effectively. As a result, personalized advisory education classes have been integrated into grade 9 English language arts classes and a personalized program is being trialed in Level 1 English language arts classes. Within one of the smaller learning communities, teachers of English language arts are testing a "Great Books" curriculum that is designed to prepare students to participate in advanced placement language and literature courses.

The school recognizes that the key area for improvement lies in differentiating teaching, especially as large classes comprised of up to 34 students of varying performance levels are commonplace. Formal and informal observations of teaching conducted by the principal and senior leaders are followed up with reviews and discussion so that school goals can be articulated and reinforced. The school's challenge is to convert low-key and lackluster classes, where they exist, into those that engage all students consistently and heighten their interest.

In its drive to raise achievement, the school is aiming to improve attendance rates and punctuality. One drawback is that information is collected manually in classrooms and calls to parents are not made until the afternoon of the day of absence. Budgetary decisions are well managed to support student improvement and scheduling is effective in spite of the 140 percent usage of the building capacity.

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

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The principal and other school leaders have a detailed knowledge of the school and select staff with care. Once on the faculty, staff are well provided with professional development. The school recognizes the need to raise the performance of its teachers and clear strategies are in place to meet this objective. The current focus of staff training, ably led by the full-time consultant, is on improving student literacy and developing the pedagogy required to promote a culture where teachers work in teams to reflect on the quality of their teaching practice. As part of the "Literacy across Content Areas" program, individual departments are conducting learning walks and results are shared and discussed openly. Across the school, teachers are encouraged to visit colleagues' classrooms to share knowledge and refine skills. Talking openly about the school's goals and how they can be achieved has been linked to the recent "curriculum wall" initiative, which is involving all departments in identifying the connections between their subjects.

The principal is highly respected by all sections of the school community. Parents, staff and students all remark on how committed she is and how accessible. They praise her for maintaining an open door, knowing everyone and giving generously of her personal time. On account of this, and the able support of the assistant principals and cabinet, the school runs smoothly.

Students feel a sense of pride in the school and appreciate its illustrious history. There is a strong sense of school identity. Most students get on well together and enjoy positive relationships with adults. Students find that staff are supportive and ready to listen to them when they have problems or concerns. However, they would like to be better informed about the reasons for changes in school procedures.

The school is very effective at involving a broad range of outside agencies and professionals in giving help and advice. Through well-developed links, students are offered mentoring opportunities, internships, summer programs, school to career exploration opportunities and college preparation tuition. Parents are also involved in activities and community building. Their input is seen through the Parent Coordinator, the Parents' Leadership Team, the Parents' Association Comprehensive Education Plan and teacher-parent sessions. Parent classes are offered so that parents can support their children in completing homework.

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 developed good procedures to monitor the work of its students. Baseline data is collected and reviewed regularly. The school feels that data is used particularly effectively in the small learning communities and cites the many class changes that have been made to meet the individual needs of students as a result of close and holistic tracking of student progress within the small learning community framework. For their part, all students in the school are aware of the contents of their transcripts and are clearly informed about what they have achieved and what they need to do to improve their work. For the future, the school plans to increase the role of parents in the evaluation and planning of goals. It also intends to enhance the use of technology in data collection and retrieval.

Student improvement is driving goals and school leaders are ready to use the information generated by periodic assessments and diagnostic measures of progress to revise plans immediately in order to improve student outcomes. Successive phases of goal-setting are characterized by agile and flexible realignment of practices and resources, as demonstrated in the addition this year of a new small learning community designated "Future Educators" in the 10th grade. Flexible budget management is also exemplified in the recent provision of planners for all students. The school carries out student, staff and parent surveys to inform planning. Parents have been invited to participate in small learning community information sessions to ensure that they have an understanding of the goals and study requirements of the respective courses.

The school is working hard to involve staff in the creation, evaluation and revision of plans for improvement. The leadership understands the need to identify success criteria and interim goals against which the progress of initiatives may be measured, but this process is not yet central to all developments in the school. To encourage consistency of expectation among teachers, school leaders are prioritizing the systematic analysis of how teaching impacts on learning.

Despite the energy and determination that is going into school improvement, the school has not yet sufficiently raised achievement to reach the State objectives for certain student groups in English language arts and mathematics. The quality of self-evaluation in the school is good and specific areas in need of improvement are reflected in the diagnostic Comprehensive Education Plan, which is an effective tool for long-term planning.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME : De Witt Clinton High School (HS 440)	∅	✓	+
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	