



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

**Williamsburg High School for Architecture and
Design**

**High School 558
257 North 6th Street
Brooklyn
NY 11211**

Principal: Steven Farina

Dates of review: May 27 - 28, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Jeffery Plumb

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Williamsburg is a high school with 386 students from 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 52% Black, 41% Hispanic, 4% White, and 3% Asian students. The student body includes 3% English language learners and 3% special education students. Boys account for 78% of the students enrolled and girls account for 22%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 -2008 was 85.9%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 61% eligibility.

The school is in its fourth year. Students will graduate for the first time in the summer of 2008. The principal is in his second year. The assistant principal and special educational needs co-ordinator are in their first year. The majority of teachers are young and new to the profession. The school has a focus on architecture and design and is in the process of developing a program in electronics and engineering technology to input a course on robotics to motivate student interest in learning.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Through a successful credit recovery program the school has significantly reduced the number of credit behind students.
- The number of serious incidents and suspensions are dropping significantly as a result of the good work of the related services.
- Partnerships with outside agencies provide job shadow opportunities to support students most at risk from dropping out of school and to keep them on track.
- Good analysis of data and planning by the inquiry team has raised achievement in global history.
- The induction of and support for new teachers is good because of the good mentor support they receive.
- The funding of an after school program for credit recovery has a positive impact on maintaining students' interest.
- Administration is candidly honest and accepts that the school's underperformance lies in a lack of efficient planning systems.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop robust baseline assessments for English language arts, math and science and put a system in place to track student progress over time.
- Ensure that teachers are provided with high quality data about the prior attainment of their students so that they can differentiate their instruction.
- Ensure that professional development targets data management and teachers' needs to improve their planning and differentiate their instruction.
- Improve the curriculum and instruction in architecture and develop a science curriculum relevant to student needs.
- Reduce the student tardiness at lesson change and improve attendance.
- Establish a written, clear strategic action plan with sharp interim and time-lined goals to gauge success to improve instruction and raise achievement.

Part 3: Main Findings

Progress made since the last review

The school has made little progress in addressing the issues identified in the previous Quality Review report.

Overall Evaluation

This school is underdeveloped.

Progress since the previous Quality Review has been too slow. The lack of robust baseline assessments in English language arts, math and science means that the school cannot put a cohesive system in place to track student progress over time. It also means that teachers do not have good data about what students know and can do when they start out in their classes at the beginning of the year. Consequently, they are not able to use data to differentiate their instruction to raise student achievement. There are weaknesses in the instruction for architecture and the science curriculum is not suitable to the needs of the students. Tardiness at lesson change slows learning because far too many students meander along the corridor exchanging conversation, rather than hurrying to get to their next lesson. Attendance improved between 2006 and 2007 due to an effective action plan and robust procedures to follow up absence, but has now reached a plateau. The attendance of a small proportion of students is poor.

The principal is honest about the fact that the school's underperformance is due to a lack of data systems. He refuses to blame the students. Some actions have led to recent significant improvements. Robust and clear credit recovery and suspension action plans with time lined interim goals have led to a significant reduction in the number of credit behind students and a drop in the number of student suspensions. The planning process is understood by the administration, but the long-term goals to improve instruction and raise student achievement in the school's Comprehensive Education Plan lack stepped goals and consequently this plan does not effect change. The laudable goals in this plan are unrealistic because they are not resourced or monitored and there are no established milestones through the year to achieve them.

The inquiry team demonstrates that administration has the skill to analyze data and take decisive action to raise student achievement. This is evident in the work done to raise the achievement of a targeted group of students in global history. The principal is a clear strategic thinker and the relatively new administration team understands what needs to be done to improve the school. There are clear planned actions about to be implemented to provide professional development to improve differentiated instruction and working parties are developing baseline assessments. The strategic thinking and planning process is better than the documented plans in these areas. New teachers are very well supported and many are beginning to make a valuable contribution to school improvement. Some initiatives launched, such as the introduction of periodic assessments in math, are too recent to be able to evaluate their success.

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 the student's progress over time.

This area of the school's work is underdeveloped.

The school does not have a system to gather detailed data about what students know and can do in English language arts, math and science when they enter the school. Consequently, there is no baseline data from which to measure students' progress over time in the core subjects. Because teachers do not have the prior attainment data of the students they teach they cannot effectively track their progress from the time they enter their class. There are no structures to support teachers in the use of data to inform their planning and instruction or to gauge fully the success of their work.

There is no system in place to monitor the progress of special educational needs students. English language learners lack specific goals to improve their speaking, reading and writing in English and so the school cannot track their progress in their acquisition of the English language. There is no analysis of performance data by ethnicity or gender.

Positively the school is adept at identifying students who are credits behind and in ensuring that they receive courses to gain the credits they need to put them back on track. In addition the school scrutinizes data about its past performance in respect of the number of suspensions, attendance figures and results in Regents exams.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each student's learning.

This area of the school's work is underdeveloped.

The absence of setting of goals to raise students' academic achievement in English language arts, math and science is a serious weakness, because administration lacks robust baseline assessment data about what students know and can do in these subjects. However, the capability of setting objectively measured goals for improvement exists in this school. For example, the inquiry team honed in on why a group of students who did well in their global history class went on to fail their Regents exam in this subject. They found deficiencies in teacher assessment and a lack of literacy infusion in this subject. Goals for improving instruction and also for raising student achievement were set. This cohort of students re-sat the Regents exam in the same subject again the following January and the vast majority passed with flying colors.

The plans for credit recovery and a reduction in the number of suspensions have clearly time-lined interim goals to reach the long-term goals. Both plans are incredibly successful in achieving their aims. However, the Comprehensive Education Plan has long-term goals to improve instruction and raise student achievement, but lacks the interim goals and a realistic time frame to achieve these goals. The school lacks formal structures for sharing whole school goals with all members of the school community. The school is successful in conveying high expectations to students and their parents and caregivers about students' behavior and the importance of keeping on track to

accrue the credits required to graduate. Communication is poor in conveying what students need to do to raise their achievement in the core subjects.

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.

This area of the school’s work is underdeveloped.

The curriculum for English language arts and math is satisfactory, but there is no pacing guide for English language arts. The science curriculum is not suitably matched to the needs of the students. Overall, the curriculum and instruction for architecture is not good enough. However, the art teacher engages students in exciting and relevant projects, such as designing and constructing weight bearing bridges. Extra-curricular activities are not sufficiently inclusive but a recent trip to Barcelona where students studied Antoni Gaudi’s architecture was excellent, although only a very small number of high achieving students accessed this rich experience.

Teachers are held to account through a process of lesson observations by administration. However, administration does not consistently hone in on the impact or lack of impact of instruction on learning during these observations. Teachers do not use data about students’ prior attainment to differentiate their instruction to meet their needs.

Budget, staffing and scheduling decisions based on data are satisfactory. The funding of an after school program for credit recovery has a positive impact on bringing students back on track. The majority of teachers go the extra mile to support students, but there is a small hard core who do not treat students with sufficient respect. Attendance improved between 2006 and 2007, but has flattened off. A clear and distinct action plan with stepped and time-lined objectives contributed to this improved attendance. Tardiness in getting to lessons is an issue. Following discussion with the school government an incentive program aimed at improving attendance has been launched, but it is too early to evaluate its effectiveness.

Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school’s collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

This area of the school’s work is underdeveloped.

Administration has the skill to plan professional development based on data analysis. Following an analysis focusing on a group of students who did well in their global history class, but dipped in the Regents exam, professional development was targeted at training new teachers in assessing students’ work more accurately. This has impacted on raising achievement. A program of professional development focusing on improved differentiation is about to be launched. Recognizing that teachers need good assessment data on students in their classes to plan to meet their needs the administration also proposes to implement baseline assessments in the core subjects from the start of the next academic year.

There is a model to hold teachers to account through lesson observations, but administration does not always focus sharply enough on the connection between

instruction and learning when conducting their observations. Consequently feedback to teachers is not consistently sharp to help them improve their instruction. Classroom inter-visitations are at an early stage of development. Overall, insufficient attention is paid to data analysis on student performance during teacher common planning meetings. Support for new teachers is good because of the quality of the mentoring program within the school.

The pupil personnel team makes satisfactory use of data to set goals for students at risk of suspension or dropping out of school. Setting and monitoring of student behavior goals is good and impacts on improved behavior. The school does not run smoothly enough. Too many students are very slack in moving from the end of one lesson to the start of the next. This slows their learning. Effective use is made of partnerships with outside agencies to provide an after school arts program and to provide job shadowing opportunities for students at risk of dropping out of school.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.

This area of the school's work is underdeveloped.

The school's Comprehensive Education Plan has long-term goals focused on improving instruction and raising achievement in reading and writing, but lacks time-lined objectives to reach these goals. Consequently, this plan fails to make a sufficiently positive impact on school improvement. However, the principal knows how to plan effectively as evidenced by planning to reduce suspensions and put students back on track with the credits they need to graduate. Yet, administration intends to launch professional development to improve teachers' differentiation skills without a plan, with bite sized and time-lined objectives, to achieve this very laudable goal, and this is a serious weakness.

The school is at an early stage of using periodic assessments in math, and it is too early to evaluate the effectiveness of this initiative. It plans a detailed analysis of the Regents exams this summer and has the skills to conduct this exercise. Currently the school does not use the information generated from the few periodic assessments in place to revise plans immediately. The lack of data systems for tracking student progress seriously impedes speedy modifications to planning to raise achievement. The principal and his fellow administrators have a clear vision for the future and have demonstrated that they know how to plan for improvement, but in respect of their next priorities they have not drawn up robust action plans. Much of what they intend to do is in their heads and has not been set out on written plans. Without clearly set out plans, which are understood and owned by teachers, there is a risk that this school will continue to fail students.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Williamsburg High School for Architecture and Design	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
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Quality Score	X				
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Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather and generate data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor the students progress over time.

To what extent do school leaders and faculty provide . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
1.1 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of each student, classroom, grade level?	X				
1.2 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of special education students?	X				
1.3 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of English language learners?	X				
1.4 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of ethnic groups, gender groups and all other categories of interest to the school?	X				
1.5 a measurement of performance and progress based on the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grades and subject areas?		X			
1.6 a measurement of performance and progress based on comparisons with similar schools?	X				
1.7 training, management systems and structures that support teachers in the use of school data to inform planning and instruction and to track the progress of students?	X				
Overall score for Quality Statement 1	X				

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each students learning.

To what extent do school leaders and faculty . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
2.1 engage in collaborative processes to set rigorous, objectively measurable goals for improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals?	X				
2.2 focus 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 identify and improve the performance and progress of those students in greatest need of improvement?		X			
2.4 share whole school goals with all members of the school community to rigorously improve the performance and progress of students?	X				
2.5 convey consistently high expectations to students and their parents/caregivers?		X			
2.6 regularly provide students and their parents/caregivers with information about the goals set for each student, and about each student's progress and performance, and how they can improve?	X				
2.7 invite and enable parents/caregivers to provide useful information to teachers and the school about the learning needs and capacities of their children?	X				
Overall score for Quality Statement 2	X				

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.

To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
3.1 select core curricular approaches that facilitate and provide meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and focus on raising the achievement of students?	X				
3.2 provide a broad and engaging curriculum, including the arts, to enhance learning both within and outside the school day?	X				
3.3 hold teachers accountable for the progress and learning of the students in their charge, for making instruction interesting and compelling, and for creating a positive safe and inclusive learning environment?	X				
3.4 ensure that teachers use school, class and student data to plan for and provide differentiated instruction that meets the specific needs of all the students in their charge?	X				
3.5 make budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions strategically, based on data, to meet the school's academic goals for all students?			X		
3.6 ensure that there is an environment of mutual trust and respect between all staff and students to support personal and academic development?		X			
3.7 ensure that there are effective and consistently applied procedures to encourage and monitor student attendance and tardiness?			X		
Overall score for Quality Statement 3	X				

Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school’s collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.					
To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
4.1 use frequent observations of classroom teaching by the principal and other available information to develop a differentiated strategy for improving the quality of each teacher’s instruction?	X				
4.2 make professional development decisions strategically, based on data, to help meet the improvement goals of students and teachers?	X				
4.3 provide frequent opportunities for teachers to observe each other’s classroom instruction and to meet together in teams to plan, share effective practices, and evaluate one another’s instruction in an open and reflective professional environment?	X				
4.4 develop effective procedures for the induction and support of teachers who are new to the profession or the school?			X		
4.5 align youth development, guidance/advising and other student support services around stated academic and personal development goals?			X		
4.6 consistently implement clear procedures that enable the school to run smoothly and encourage effective student learning, and effectively address discipline related incidents?	X				
4.7 create effective partnerships with outside entities that support the academic and personal growth of the students?			X		
Overall score for Quality Statement 4					
	X				

Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student’s progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.					
To what extent do . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?		X			
5.2 the school’s plans for improving teacher outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?	X				
5.3 teachers and faculty use periodic assessments and other diagnostic tools to measure the effectiveness of plans and interventions for individual and groups of students in key areas?	X				
5.4 teachers and faculty use the information generated by periodic assessments and other progress measures and comparisons to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals?	X				
5.5 school leaders track the outcomes of periodic assessments and other diagnostic measures and use the results to makes strategic decisions to modify practices to improve student outcomes?	X				
5.6 school leaders and staff use each plan’s interim and final outcomes to drive the next stage of goal setting and improvement planning?	X				
5.7 the principal and school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to effect change?		X			
Overall score for Quality Statement 5					
	X				

◇	Outstanding
+	Well Developed
✓	Proficient
➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features
Δ	Underdeveloped