



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

George Westinghouse High School

High School 605

**105 Tech Place
Brooklyn
NY 11201**

Principal: John Widlund

Dates of review: February 4 – 5, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Anne Evanoff

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

George Westinghouse High School is a high school with 892 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 75% Black, 19% Hispanic, 2% White, 2% Native American and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 2% English language learners and 9% special education students. Boys account for 59% of the students enrolled and girls account for 41%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 83.7%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 56% eligibility.

The school is a career and technical high school that combines an academic program through the Regents' examination process and a technical program that prepares students for careers in vision care, multimedia, engineering design, computer repair, electrical technology and CISCO networking. In 2007, the school engaged in a major restructuring, which resulted in the development of three smaller learning academies within which it provides services and programs to students.

What the school does well

- The principal has established a clear vision for school improvement and is leading the school towards greater success for more students.
- The principal, assistant principals, and staff are committed to gathering and using data effectively to inform instruction and improve student learning.
- The administrative team uses data effectively to make strategic decisions to modify programs and practices to improve student outcomes.
- The principal has developed whole school goals that reflect the needs of the school and shares them with all stakeholders.
- Administration and staff have consistently high expectations for student success and challenge students to reach higher.
- School leaders use each plan's interim and final outcomes to drive the next stage of goal setting and improvement planning.
- Parents and students respect and trust school personnel and support the vision of the school.
- The school has reorganized into three different academies that integrate guidance support services to address the needs of students more effectively.
- The administrative team has developed procedures that allow the school to operate effectively and ensure high attendance and punctuality.
- The school has established good relationships with a variety of outside agencies and organizations to enrich and enhance student growth.

What the school needs to improve

- Build the capacity of staff to use data to identify students' learning needs, set individual goals and differentiate instruction to improve student success.
- Provide a school-wide focus on the use of high yield instructional strategies and embed exemplary practices that influence student learning.
- Provide a homework website so that parents can support their children at home.
- Review the current curricular approach to ensure that it aligns with achieving short- and long-term goals in meeting students' learning needs.
- Involve students in school improvement activities such as developing a school-wide focus on literacy.

Part 3: Main Findings

Progress made since the last review

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

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Students thoroughly enjoy coming to school and appreciate the hard work of the staff and administration. They feel that the school has a “warrior spirit” because students overcome all kinds of obstacles to succeed. Students are highly involved in the life of the school and many attend an early morning meeting every Friday to interact with the staff. Parents totally support the vision of the principal and believe that it makes a positive impact on their lives. Expectations for student achievement are high and the school works together to make sure that “no students fall through the cracks”.

The school effectively gathers and uses data to set goals, plan instruction and monitor student progress. The administrative team actively engages in strategic planning and establishing whole school goals that focus the school on “next steps”. The administrative team is committed to providing ongoing professional development to support teachers in using data to plan, set goals and enhance their ability to differentiate. They recognize the need to develop a school-wide focus on high yield instructional strategies and involve parents and students in the school improvement process.

The school has effectively addressed the recommendations of the last Quality Review by creating an interdisciplinary focus on literacy across the grades and subjects, by continuing to build the capacity of staff to differentiate instruction and improve teacher practices and by closely disaggregating its data. The inquiry team has identified its focus group. It is in the process of planning next steps to address learning needs.

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 well developed.

The school places a high priority in “interrogating its data” to better understand what students can and cannot do. The administrative team, grade teams, and guidance personnel regularly engage in monitoring student progress through credit accumulation, passing rates and attendance patterns. The school effectively creates a spreadsheet of student data for each subject area, which includes mid-term results and outcomes. Teachers use the spreadsheets as a focal point to discuss student progress at grade conferences and guidance meetings and to plan more effectively. Moreover, the administration runs a cohort analysis of the data by grade to compare performance across the grades to understand better the trends and patterns in student achievement. Special education teachers are consistently engaged in setting goals and monitoring student progress through the education planning committee. They work closely with subject teachers to modify student assignments and target instruction to specific learning goals. Because the school mainstreams special education students in key subject areas, the new

academy structure ensures a “whole team approach” to meeting their needs. The administrative team created a “custom spreadsheet” for English language learners and hired an English language coordinator to support students in developing proficiency. The administrative team has successfully disaggregated its data by ethnic and gender groups and made comparisons by cohort, academy and similar schools. Through this analysis, the school identified the need to provide additional support for girls in math. Staff members also visited similar schools and identified the need to create a “print rich environment” for students as well as a more interactive instructional approach that actively engages learners. Although the school provides ongoing professional development, the administrators recognize the need to continue to build the capacity of staff to create “student-centered literacy activities”, inquiry-based instructional strategies, and to use data more effectively to monitor student progress for instructional purposes.

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 proficient.

The school’s administrative team continues to work towards using data more effectively in setting measurable goals and planning for improvement. There is a high level of commitment to ensuring that all students graduate with a Regents diploma and either pursue a higher level of education or a career in technology. However, the school has not consistently examined its data to understand each individual student’s “specific next learning steps” and set suitably high goals for accelerating learning. While the school engages in collaborative processes to set goals for improvement, they largely measure their success by the number of credits students obtain. However, some students are content to “just get a pass” which works against higher career aspirations.

This year, the administrative team provided each set of academy teachers with common preparation time to facilitate curriculum mapping, lesson planning and a focus on moving students forward. During these meetings, they effectively communicate high expectations for student achievement and reinforce the need to challenge students to reach even higher. The school consistently shares these expectations with all stakeholders through school wide events, newsletters and activities. The school uses data to identify individual students who are in the greatest need of improvement and is working with the inquiry team members to improve the performance of a group of students who have not been as successful in math. Although some students are involved in setting specific goals and planning next steps for improvement with teachers, this practice is inconsistent. The principal effectively shares whole school goals with all members of the community to improve the performance of students, but more work is required to involve more parents in knowing how to support their children at home so that all students can achieve at a higher level. Parents are highly supportive of the school, the administration and the teachers. They feel comfortable sharing information about their children and feel that the school listens and addresses their concerns very well. Many parents have expressed the need for a homework website so that they can be more readily aware of upcoming tests.

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 well developed.

The principal has been highly engaged in using data to make informed decisions that strategically support the school's goals. The school's transition to smaller learning communities is a good example of how it has carefully reviewed the needs of students and created schedules, guidance support and blocks of time that more successfully meet those needs. The scheduling of common preparation time for each academy has supported greater consistency in planning and instruction. The school has effectively adopted the Teachers' College workshop model with an emphasis on the mini-lesson to build student skills. However, the school does not gather enough interim data to determine whether this approach is having the desired effect on student literacy. In an effort to build a whole-school focus on literacy, the school is in the process of incorporating an interdisciplinary approach to teaching literacy. Teachers are effectively using entrance and exit cards with their students as a form of pre- and post-assessment to check on student understanding. The school is piloting a "backward design" approach with grade 9 teachers with the long-term goal of implementing it throughout the grades. The purpose in using this design model is to ensure that teachers plan culminating activities at the end of each unit that are engaging and authentic. This focus has resulted in a more compelling curriculum and provided more opportunities for some teachers to learn how to differentiate instruction more effectively.

The principal and assistant principals for each academy frequently visit classrooms, observe teachers teaching and hold staff accountable for their instructional practices. The administrative team provides feedback directly to staff and effectively follow up to ensure that teachers refine their practices. The principal is highly respected and trusted by teachers, students and parents. Many young people in the school view him as a "father figure".

Attendance has continued to rise over the last three years because the school is diligent in tracking students. The school operates efficiently and smoothly because there are many policies and procedures in place that have become routine. Both parents and students totally support the school because they see how much the staff care and how "no problem is so big that it can't be solved".

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 well developed.

Although the administrative team regularly visits classrooms and observes teacher practices, there is still much work to do in determining a central focus related to "key exemplary practices". There is a special emphasis on blending both academic and technical programs. However, there are no guiding principles or initiatives related to what good teaching looks like to drive the school towards better outcomes. The administration is dedicated to promoting a greater understanding of "what makes a successful classroom" and regularly involves staff in such discussions at common grade planning meetings. Part of this initiative relates to building the capacity of staff to use an interdisciplinary approach for literacy and math skills. As a result, some teachers are very committed to using pacing guides to plan, to incorporating word walls and using various protocols and templates. The school has been very successful in using data to make strategic decisions related to school-wide teacher training. When they noticed that the level of student understanding of certain terminology affected performance, the staff readily engaged in workshops focusing on vocabulary development. These are all good starting points in creating a meaningful learning environment but the school has yet to go deeper in building a shared understanding of what constitutes "high yield instructional strategies" across all subjects. The administrative team recognizes the need for

differentiating individual professional development based on classroom observations, walk-throughs and teacher surveys. The school operates smoothly because of the effective policies and procedures that clearly define what is expected. The school has developed several effective partnerships with outside organizations such as the HBSC Bank, which sponsors their virtual enterprise project. Students are highly engaged in running a student center, which contributes to the life of the school and involves the entire student body in proactive and positive activities. The student leaders are eager to become more involved in improvement planning and have some good ideas for promoting the school's literacy goals.

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 proficient.

The principal and the school community have a clear vision for the development of the school. They have effectively used past data to drive the next stage of goal setting and improvement in the school. For example, the administrative team successfully restructured the whole school, at the end of the last school year, to create three academies that more closely align with the learning needs of students. Within those separate structures, they incorporated guidance services, lead teachers, coaches, intervention staff and assistant principals to create a "support web" for every individual. As a result, support services are more personalized and accessible. Teachers and students agree that intervention is more readily available and accessible on an "as needed basis". Support staff can more effectively track and monitor attendance, punctuality, credit accumulation and student progress. The school is closely tracking student data, such as Regents prep, exams, and scholarship reports, and results indicate an upward trend in student success.

The administrative team is engaging more staff in using pre-assessment, formative, and summative assessments to improve student learning. Administrators continue to support teachers in identifying interim goals that are measurable, teaching to those goals and making adjustments and as needed. However, the school has not embedded these practices sufficiently well. It is making progress towards more effective use of periodic assessments and other tools to measure the effectiveness of plans and interventions for individuals and groups of students. Some subject teachers are consistently using a variety of data to assess performance and progress. They effectively use data to revise lesson plans, create strategy or skills groups and ensure they meet student goals. Nevertheless, the school has yet to implement these practices consistently throughout all grades and subjects so that instruction can more effectively target specific learning needs.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: George Westinghouse High School	△	▷	✓	+	◇
Quality Score			X		

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 . . .	△	▷	✓	+	◇
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 . . .	△	▷	✓	+	◇
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 . . .	△	▷	✓	+	◇
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