



**NYCDOE**

**Quality Review: Final Report**

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



# **Quality Review Report**

**Washington Irving School**

**High School 460**

**40 Irving Place  
New York  
NY 10003**

**Principal: Dr. Denise DiCarlo**

**Dates of review: May 14 - 16, 2008**

**Lead Reviewer: Frank Jones**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Washington Irving is a high school with 2237 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 33% Black, 59% Hispanic, 2% White, and 4% Asian students. The student body includes 20% English language learners and 9% special education students. Boys account for 44% of the students enrolled and girls account for 56%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 73.3%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 74% eligibility.

This large high school is organized into seven small learning communities, also referred to as houses, each with an assistant principal in charge. Reorganization will take place next year with a school opening on the same site. Approximately 450 students from Washington Irving High School will transfer to the new school. Washington Irvine has hired a new principal and the current principal will move to the new school. Both principals attended the exit meeting.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The houses foster positive relationships so students feel well known and part of the community.
- Collaborative arrangements within the houses enable teachers to learn from each other by sharing and discussing instructional strategies.
- Teachers are developing a sound understanding of data so they can identify areas where students need to improve their knowledge and skills.
- Professional development enhances staff expertise through relevant training.
- Partnerships with community organizations provide extensive opportunities for students to develop and enrich their learning.
- The use of data by the inquiry team is significantly improving instruction and the academic performance of students.
- Comprehensive support structures enable the additional needs of vulnerable students to be well met.
- Each house provides a relevant curriculum and an interesting variety of activities to reflect their designation.
- The support given to teachers new to the profession or school is good.
- Assistant principals work exceptionally hard and are committed to the development of the school.

### What the school needs to improve

- Develop and implement a clear strategic plan to identify the key improvement actions.
- Provide firm leadership and direction to promote increased cohesion, coherence and consistency within and across the small learning communities.
- Disaggregate and analyze gender, ethnicity and group data to establish what patterns emerge.
- Explore a wider range of strategies to improve attendance, student behavior and parental participation.
- Further improve all teachers' understanding and use of differentiation so instruction is interesting and engaging.
- Use prior attainment data to set long and short-term achievement goals for all students that are realistic, challenging and measurable.

## 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 proficient.**

The house system fosters positive relationships between students and staff so students feel safe, secure and develop in confidence. Students like the identity the houses afford. Teachers benefit from meeting together to discuss the curriculum and instructional strategies. Training to develop teacher expertise in differentiated instruction has taken place. However, the impact on instruction and student progress is inconsistent across the school. The use of data across and within the houses is variable but beginning to improve student progress. Students profit from the curriculum offered by each house and the electives provide an exciting range of valuable experiences that broaden students' learning. Care for vulnerable students including special education students is good. Guidance teams provide valuable support for all students. The very good work of the inquiry team is significantly improving the performance of the students it works with. Their detailed analysis of data and their use to track and measure progress has the potential to develop accurate goal setting. Short-term goals are set for students at class level but this is not consistent. Use of prior performance data is underdeveloped. Goals are set but they are often too vague to be measurable. As advised by the last Quality Review, the absence of a common grading policy makes it difficult to make rigorous comparisons between grades, classes and subjects. There has been insufficient measurable progress against the majority of the areas identified in the previous review. The assistant principals work extremely hard but their efforts are hampered by a lack of firm strategic direction from the principal and the support they need to be successful. At times this leads to a lack of consistency, coherence and applied focus across the school which adversely impacts on student progress and performance.

### 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 proficient.**

The school routinely gathers data regarding the progress of students towards meeting the Regents graduation requirements. The cabinet analyzes this information to compare the performance of houses, subjects, grades and classes. Inconsistent use is made of this information. However it was used effectively to encourage those seniors who met graduation requirements at a low level to retake the Regents exams in English language arts and math. The analysis of ethnic and gender data is only perfunctory so the school therefore does not have a clear understanding of the performance of these or other student groups. There is inconsistent collection of class based assessment data across houses and within subjects. Some teachers test students at the beginning of the year

and at the end of units to measure student performance and progress and to adapt their instruction to meet identified need. This is not common practice in all subjects or for all teachers and the variation in performance between classes illustrates this.

Performance data for English language learners and special education students is kept constantly under review to measure their progress. Individual education plans for special education students are extremely well conceived and provide an accurate tool to measure progress against. The proficiency of language use for English language learners is carefully tracked but poor attendance levels and absence on testing days adversely affects the number of students testing out. Data from the City is used to monitor year-on-year performance of the students against state standards and previous performance. The trend is downwards. The school believes this is the result of some weak instruction, poor attendance and additional students joining the school each week. This data is not analyzed in enough detail to identify other possible reasons for this declining performance. The principal selected a network of similar schools to join and, although she compares the difference in grades with these schools from the progress report, she considers the comparisons invalid because of the unique organization of her school. Many teachers have begun to understand the value and relevance of the data they receive. This is a developing area but data use and application is variable across and between houses and impacts adversely on the rate of progress of many students.

**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 with proficient features.**

The school has developed a detailed Comprehensive Education Plan containing a wide range of targets, a restructuring plan, a special education plan and a plan for English language learners. These are all State requirements. The volume of work to produce and implement them all has been overwhelming and resulted in limited impact. All goals, such as ensuring there is a literacy component in each lesson, are difficult to measure and monitor. Equally, goals with percentages attached provided by the City take no account of students’ prior attainment so they have little relevance and do not accurately measure school or subject performance. Class-based goals are more focused as they are developed from conferencing and diagnostic testing and clearly identify next learning steps as part of a continuum to graduation. Both students and teachers see their relevance. The Wilson reading program similarly provides realistic goals that are progressive and measurable. Teachers express a level of enthusiasm for the potential of using Acuity in projecting performance and accurately setting goals.

There are relevant goals for special education students, which enable teachers to focus instruction. Students benefit as a result and make good progress. The school has put in place numerous support programs for students who are in danger of failing to graduate. Scrutiny of data at cabinet and house level identifies these students. The guidance department is very effective in making provision for students in danger of failure. The academic intervention services play a similar role for students identified as at risk in math and English language arts by providing focused support both during and after the school day. This enabled more students to pass the Regents graduation requirements. Parents express the view that communication with and from the school is variable in its quality and depends on the teacher concerned. They welcome the report cards but at

times find the information confusing. They appreciate the work of the assistant principals and find them supportive. Parents feel comfortable contacting school, knowing they will be listened to and supported as necessary. They are less positive about a small minority of teacher's attitudes and expectations of students. This view was born out during lesson observations where behavior was inconsistent between classes.

**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 proficient.**

The curriculum provides frequent opportunities to gather meaningful data to understand and monitor the progress of students. Each subject area has a pacing calendar to provide continuity and progression in learning that is a useful guide for staff. Some teachers do not use data sufficiently to inform instruction and identify learning objectives. When this occurs, students become disengaged and their behavior deteriorates. The development of differentiation has been a focus for the school. However, the limited pace of implementation and the lack of depth in understanding the strategy has restricted its use and impact on instruction. Discussions take place between teachers and leaders about student progress. This provides a valuable opportunity to look in detail at what each student knows and where to accelerate improvement.

Students benefit from the specific curriculum and specialism offered by each house. Electives and honors courses excite and engage students providing opportunities for them to gain further depth and understanding in their learning. A partnership with a local law firm has enabled students to engage in realistic mock trials and experience computer forensics. This relevance and application of skills heightens student interest and promotes quality learning. Students relate well to their houses and talk about having an identity with them. As one student said, "I feel known." Students become more mature as they move through the school. They become confident knowing that positive help and support is available from teachers and guidance staff.

The individual houses do not have their own budget, which hampers their ability to meet their individual and specific strategic needs. Data informs expenditure and the school targets resources on areas of need such as additional provision for those students in need of credit recovery. The school has allocated significant finances to improve attendance but it remains low.

**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 proficient.**

Teachers benefit from a regular system of formal and informal class observations carried out by the administration. They find the follow up discussion and the specific recommendations contained in their personal development plans useful. The collaborative arrangements within the houses provide useful occasions for teachers to learn from each other. The sharing and discussion of instructional strategies enhances

teacher understanding of future areas of development. This takes place in grades and subject areas. The latter provide a useful forum to discuss subject specific issues and develop effective practice. Inter visitations take place where possible in some houses. Teachers report that they value this opportunity to learn from each other. Professional development enhances staff expertise through relevant training. Analysis of data and need is undertaken and suitable professional support, such as in the use of Aris or differentiation follows. Teachers new to the profession are appreciative of the level of support they receive from their mentor and specifically the assistant principals. As one said, "She is always there for me."

Rigorous guidance systems and support structures operate in each house. Teachers meet regularly with support staff and counselors to assist parents and students deemed at risk. Special education students are equally well provided for so they make good progress. An extremely wide range of partnerships with community organizations are in place. They provide extensive opportunities for students to develop and enrich their learning. The school has focused on improving discipline throughout the school which now runs relatively smoothly on a day to day basis.

**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 leadership team work exceptionally hard and are committed to the development of the school. At times there is an absence of firm direction and leadership which has created a lack of cohesion, coherence and consistency within and across the houses. This has adversely affected the pace of change and student performance. The school does not have a clear strategic plan that identifies the key actions required to improve the school. Too many plans imposed from outside have confused rather than supported the development of the school. In addition, the lack of measurable goals with suitable timeframes makes it difficult to monitor and revise plans when required. Report cards at the end of the marking periods provide information on what students know and can do. They identify the progress students are making towards graduation. However, the lack of a common grading policy within and across houses makes the validity of performance comparisons tenuous and decisions less robust.

Regular interim measurements of student's progress are in place. The cabinet frequently monitors the performance of teachers and students and subsequently employs strategies to remedy problems that they have identified. The cabinet also monitors the progress of classes' subjects and grades. In this way, they identify shortcomings and provide the required support. Similarly, teachers meet in subject groups to evaluate student progress. Necessary modifications and adjustments are made to both the curriculum and where required instruction as a result. Diagnostic tests, ongoing assessments and individual education plans are used effectively to scrutinize student performance. Some teachers use this data to provide apt short-term targets that identify the next steps in learning but this strategy is not used consistently across the school. In addition, longer, quantifiable goals based on prior performance are not yet in place.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: Washington Irving High School</b>	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
<b>Quality Score</b>			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 . . .	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		
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>			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			
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>		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			
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>			X		

<b>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.</b>					
<b>To what extent does the school . . .</b>	<b>Δ</b>	<b>➤</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</b>	<b>◇</b>
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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>			X		

<b>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.</b>					
<b>To what extent do . . .</b>	<b>Δ</b>	<b>➤</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</b>	<b>◇</b>
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			
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>			X		

◇	<b>Outstanding</b>
+	<b>Well Developed</b>
✓	<b>Proficient</b>
➤	<b>Underdeveloped with Proficient Features</b>
Δ	<b>Underdeveloped</b>