



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

William Cullen Bryant High School

High School 445

48-10 31 Avenue

Queens

NY 11103

Principal: Christopher Pellettieri

Dates of review: March 31 – April 1, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Nick Butt

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

William Cullen Bryant School is a high school with 3100 students from 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 10% Black, 47% Hispanic, 15% White, and 28% Asian students. The student body includes 23% English language learners and 13% special education students. Boys account for 55% of the students enrolled and girls account for 45%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006 - 2007 was 83.7%. The school is not in receipt of Title 1 funding.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal lives out his vision for the school each day, commanding the respect and loyalty of the whole community.
- Staff use data to gain a good knowledge of the strengths and areas to develop of the students they teach.
- The school makes very good use of data to help special education students and English language learners to improve.
- Some innovative interventions have resulted in groups of students making good progress in English, math, science and social studies.
- The school's high expectations produce an orderly and harmonious learning community.
- The curriculum has great breadth and serves the needs and interests of students very well.
- Relationships between students and staff are very positive because of the school's culture of respect.
- Teachers benefit from high quality professional development to support their instruction.
- Clear roles and responsibilities for all staff help this very large school to run smoothly as a well-oiled machine.
- Staff make good use of data to evaluate the effectiveness of their plans to improve students' progress.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop data management systems that are easy for staff to access and use.
- Study in more depth the reasons why there are variations in the performance of different ethnic groups.
- Ensure every department adopts the good practice of the best in setting long-term goals for students.
- Engage students in their learning further by always planning lessons that meet their different needs.
- Make whole school goals more challenging and map out clearly how they will be achieved.
- Give sufficient rigor to departmental action plans and ensure they include detailed steps to measure their success.

Part 3: Main Findings

Progress made since the last review

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

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

The principal says, "I want to make the school a place where teachers want to teach and students want to learn." The happy atmosphere of the school stems from his commitment to his staff and students. He is readily available and regularly walks the hallways and classrooms to find out what is going on. One student said, "He works very hard at making the school a big family."

Staff use data well to understand the progress of their individual students, even though the school's management systems are not easy to access or interpret. The school gathers a wealth of information about special education students and English language learners and uses this to very good effect to help them to progress well. The work of departments in analyzing the performance of ethnic groups varies, so that reasons for underperformance are not always clearly defined. In some departments, such as science, goals for students are clearly based on data and take a long-term view, with interim steps for students to reach them. This is not always the case in other departments, as was noted at the time of the last review. Since the previous review, the school has adopted a uniform writing rubric that is being used across all subject areas. The English department has done some pioneering work in looking at how students' learning styles affect their development. The principal ensures data gathered from walkthroughs gives a clear overview of instruction in the school. The principal and cabinet set whole school goals with the school leadership team, but these are not always as challenging as they could be, especially in setting ambitious targets for improvement.

The school offers a particularly wide choice of courses to students at different levels of entry to suit all needs and interests. Students enjoy their lessons and get on well with their teachers, because the school values them as individuals and shows them respect. Clear rituals and routines give the school a settled and purposeful identity. Everybody knows what is expected of them and where they fit in.

Teachers have many opportunities to develop professionally. The administration ensures it meets their needs, and encourages them to be creative and try out new ideas. Lessons often engage students well, and teachers usually try to group them in ways that will accelerate their learning. There are occasions when students do not make the progress they could because planning does not take full account of their different learning needs. The inquiry team has done a useful study of the reading skills of over-age under-credited grade twelve students. It is now considering how it can apply what it has found out to its ninth graders. The strategic plans that departments write vary in the extent to which they set goals successfully, and in the detail they include in describing steps to reach them.

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.

Teachers often devise their own systems to gather the data they need, partly because exam information comes in too late in the year to be of much use for incoming ninth graders. The school has some systems that are centrally based for teachers to use, but these tend to focus on individual students and do not make it easy to analyze data by classroom, subject or grade. The special education department produces a very detailed handbook to assist its teachers in the use of data. Teachers have compiled information about the skills English language learners need to develop and used this data to devise specific programs to support them. This has resulted in considerable gains in progress in the past year. The school has identified an issue with the progress of its Hispanic population, but the depth of analysis of ethnic groups varies between departments. Leaders look at the school's past performance and make comparisons across classes and subjects with a particular emphasis on different teachers' passing rates. They also compare themselves with similar schools and learn from their good practice, such as using English as a second language techniques to help prepare students for the English regents test.

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.

Teachers meet together in departments to set goals that are closely aligned to the whole school goals. These are often quite general and not as challenging as they could be, tending not to put a figure on the amount of improvement the school would like to see. Initiatives within individual departments help groups of pupils who are a particular focus to progress well. In social studies, for example, a project linking the skills of the English regents with American history has benefited pupils. Double ramp-up classes in English are helping lower level ninth graders improve. Work with pupils in the bottom third in science and math has been particularly effective. Goals for students tend to be short-term to the next marking period. Few departments set longer-term goals that have interim steps to measure students' progress towards them.

The school sets high expectations for its students, which are frequently reinforced by the administration and teachers. Students and their parents are kept well-informed about students' progress. The new parent teacher association gives parents more opportunities to become involved in the life of the school.

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 school offers a very wide range of courses for students in academic subjects and in the arts and sports. As a parent said, "Whatever a kid could want, they have it here." These are tailored carefully to meet the needs of students and to meet the requirements of State and City exams. Courses include virtual enterprise as part of a business major, Latin, Calculus advance placement and forensic science. There is very good enrichment for students through clubs and outside school events. Family Science Night is a particular success, where the whole family can "enjoy" dissecting owl pellets and eye balls, receive catastrophic (stage) injuries and make their own slime.

A recent focus on developing writing skills across all subjects is helping students to succeed in areas where they are weaker. Teachers make their lessons interesting and generally plan to meet the needs of all students. In some classes this is more effective, with careful groupings and attention paid to students' preferred learning styles. On occasions, the work is too much the same for all students, meaning that some of them struggle to keep up and others finish too soon. Some teachers are experimenting with inter-disciplinary connections such as combining English and music through song-writing. One student noted, "Music is the language of the world."

The principal uses his budget wisely, especially in the face of substantial cuts. He has managed to keep class sizes down, and is gradually building up his stocks of laptops and smartboards. He ensures students have the additional support they need through extra classes and Saturday academy. Relationships in the school are very positive, as teachers show a genuine interest in their students and go out of their way to support them. As one student put it, "You have a lot of chances to make up stuff." Teachers treat them with respect. Parents commented how the principal models this: "He really cares about everybody and is very easy to talk to. That makes a difference to how the children and parents react." Students support one another well through peer tutoring and peer mediation, and work together cooperatively in teams. The virtual enterprise group has formed a highly professional business, selling virtual bikes on the Internet and taking on all the key roles to make their company a success. Attendance is rising, as the school has effective measures in place to promote it and to follow up absence.

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.

The principal and assistant principals undertake regular observations and snapshots of teaching to build up a clear picture of strengths and areas of need. The principal collates these so that he can identify trends or particular issues to tackle. Professional development has a whole school focus and also supports individual teachers. Administrators make effective use of the expertise already existing in the school. As the principal says, "The answers are right here!" The school is adopting its own teaching standards based on the Californian model, and these are helping to establish a

consistent approach. Outside consultants make a valuable contribution to staff development, such as the work of New York City Writing Project at Lehman College. Teachers share best practice together, and have frequent opportunities to visit one another's classrooms. They like the freedom to try out new ideas. One teacher said, "The administration let you experiment and grow." New teachers value the support they receive from their mentors and buddies, and the constructive regular feedback.

The school's support services are effective at helping students overcome barriers to their learning, and an extensive guidance program steers students towards the right college for them, starting in grade nine. The school enjoys considerable success in sending its students to top universities and four-year colleges. The routines of the school are well-established and followed consistently by all staff. The principal sets a strong example in being visible and accessible, a lead followed by his assistant principals, so that the school runs smoothly and its high standards of discipline are maintained. Students benefit from the many links with partner organizations, which support professional development of staff, after school programs, and help to sponsor aspects of the school's work. For example, College Now contributes towards the school's Global Studies program.

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 school is at an early stage of developing a systematic approach to goal-setting for its students. Most goals do not look beyond the next marking period. In some departments this work is further ahead, notably in science, special education and English language learning. Here students receive longer term goals and interim steps to show them how to reach them. Teachers use periodic assessments and other measures very effectively to judge how well their students are doing and where they need to improve. They often analyze test papers in depth to identify skills that need more work and plan their lessons to accommodate them. The work of the English department in examining students' preferred learning styles is leading to changes, with a stronger emphasis on pupil involvement and active approaches to instruction. The science department has introduced journals to encourage students to improve their writing in response to data that showed weaknesses in extended responses. Social studies are adopting a similar approach with regard to essay writing and document-based questions.

Administrators follow up well the advice they give to teachers when they next observe them, and also look for the impact of wider professional development. School leaders make effective strategic decisions to improve student outcomes, such as through offering ninth graders an intensive course in American history to build on their knowledge from middle school. Departmental plans for improvement vary in their level of rigor, with some lacking detail and ambition. They do not make clear how success will be measured and this limits their effectiveness. The principal's declared aim of "doing what I think is in the best interests of the kids" has served the school well over recent years. His deep commitment to his students and the staff shapes the school's caring environment and creates a strong sense of solidarity, as together they strive to build a better future.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: WILLIAM CULLAN BRYANT HIGH SCHOOL	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
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 . . .	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