



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

George J. Werdan III School

Elementary - Middle School 020

**3050 Webster Avenue
Bronx
NY 10467**

Principal: Carol Carlsen

Dates of review: January 28 - 30, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Jan Warner

Content of the report

Part 1: The School Context

Information about the school

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

What the school needs to improve

Part 3: Main Findings

Progress made since the last review

Overall evaluation

How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

George J. Werdan is an elementary-middle school with 1199 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 12% Black, 69% Hispanic, 7% White, and 10% Asian students. The student body includes 25% English language learners and 20% special education students. Boys account for 48% of the students enrolled and girls account for 52%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 92.2%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 80% eligibility.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Data is used routinely throughout the school to drive instruction.
- Students' well being and personal development is a focus of all the services in the school.
- The school's highly efficient systems of communication ensure that students and parents know and understand the students' learning goals.
- The excellent program of professional development in the school is based upon a culture of collaboration, deliberation and reflection.
- Both long and short term goals are fully benchmarked and communicated to the whole school community.
- There are effective systems in place for evaluating teaching and learning.
- The whole school works in a collaborative way with devolved and shared responsibility,
- The school is skilled at identifying students most in need of improvement and in providing effective strategies to meet their needs.
- Student goals, their achievements and successes are displayed throughout the school in a positive and encouraging way and high levels of mutual trust are evident.
- The principal, ably assisted by the administrative team, provides exceptional leadership for a highly committed staff.

What the school needs to improve

- Continue to develop differentiation through small-group teaching in the upper school.
- Further expand opportunities for students to engage in extra-curricular activities in order to widen their horizons.
- Further develop teachers' use of technology in order to support teaching and learning.

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 well developed.

The school serves its community well, due to high-quality leadership that focuses closely on the school's educational goals. This ensures a fully involved learning community where both staff and students are clear about what they have to achieve. All members of the community are kept fully informed and work together in a collaborative way. The way the staff work together to share and train each other and reflect upon and evaluate teaching and learning is an example of the exemplary practices developed at the school. Data is used at all levels to drive instruction and this is evident throughout the high standard of displays around the school.

Student welfare is a priority in this caring environment and high levels of mutual trust and respect are evident throughout the school. Those students in need of support are provided with well-planned interventions and make good progress. Strategic planning is very effective and is focused on meeting the school's goals and educational priorities. The principal's strong leadership has empowered teams and committees who work well together to ensure that all have a voice and that responsibility is shared. The assistant principals oversee each grade area and work as a very cohesive team. The inquiry team is well established and is studying low-achieving students in grade 5 to see why students in this grade are making the least progress in math. At present, teaching in the upper school does not include sufficient small-group focus and there is not enough provision of technology across the school. As a result of action following the recommendations made in the previous Quality Review, the school is now involving more parents in the life and work of the school through a stronger parent/teacher association. The school is also involving students in setting their own goals for learning, increasing their self-belief as a result, and celebrating their successes. The principal and her team are raising expectations at all levels to build a quality school as expressed by the school's aims and vision.

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 has established very effective systems for gathering meaningful data that gives a clear picture of the achievement of individual students. The school uses an

excellent integrated software program, which provides testing data at grade, class and individual level. Staff are provided with spreadsheets giving clear information about State tests and where students have made gains or not. Lower down the school all have similar information from ECLAS/DIBELS. Testing data is produced three times a year and each student has an individual profile which contains information about specific needs, previous support provided as well as attendance and test data. All teachers know the starting point for individual students and then closely monitor progress through the use of interim assessments, unit tests and running records. As a consequence, students are flexibly grouped and instruction closely matched to their needs. In the same way, students requiring support are well catered for through well-designed intervention strategies. English language learners and special education students are grouped according to data and given both push-in and pull-out support. As a result, the school has received extra credit for the progress made by these students in both English language arts and math. All data is monitored by gender and ethnicity and close comparisons are made with similar schools, both within the city and peer group. This helps the school to identify its own strengths and weaknesses and address areas of concern.

Teachers receive on-going training and support from the very experienced data specialist in the school to enable them to handle data. They are becoming confident in using data to promote learning and are enthusiastic about how they are now more able to tailor their instruction to student need. However, teachers are not always able to work independently with the data due to lack of technological support.

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 well developed.

School leaders ensure that whole school goals are regularly communicated and shared by all. A finite and very proactive cycle of meetings has been set up to ensure that data is monitored and shared at all levels. Students in the upper school are made aware of the monthly goals attached to units of work in all subject areas and progress charts are displayed throughout the school. The language of goal-setting is current amongst staff, students and parents. The students are involved in the item analysis process and therefore realize where their own strengths and weaknesses lie. As a result, students are becoming skilled independent learners who are extremely confident about the support they receive to achieve their own personal goals. Parents are also kept very well informed about their child’s progress via informative report cards and very regular interim reports. They are supportive of the school and what it expects of the students.

All teachers use both summative and formative data to group students according to their needs. They are aware of specific sub-groups throughout the school and all academic intervention services and class teachers are in constant communication to address these needs effectively. Intervention support staff are attached to every grade to ensure that the neediest students receive the most support. Technology is available for those supporting special education and students at risk of failing. The software used with these students allows them to work at their own pace and gives constant feedback about progress. One teacher working with at risk students described how these students ask to use this program whenever they have any spare time as they can see how much they are improving.

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 school uses curriculum plans that include comprehensive assessment of students’ progress in all subject areas. End-of-unit tests and interim assessments used from grades 3 to 5 provide extensive data which pinpoints areas of need.. Specialist science and social studies teachers promote a more “hands-on” approach to learning in the upper school to engage students fully. In the lower school the Reading First program was chosen for its structured approach to literacy and has now been extended into grade 5. This program has involved extensive professional development for all the teachers and regular support from the literacy coaches in order to ensure consistency of approach. As a result, reading levels are rising throughout the lower grades and students are now better prepared for the demands of the upper school curriculum. Art and music are taught throughout the school either as part of the curriculum in the lower school or on a rotational basis, as in the upper school. The school offers a variety of clubs and after school activities but the principal recognizes that there is a lack of opportunity for performance-related activities within the program.

All staff use assessment binders to track student progress and these are reviewed on a monthly basis using a published checklist. Coaches and assistant principals attend the weekly grade meetings to ensure that data is used to inform planning and that strengths and weaknesses are identified. Upper school teachers have been working with their lower school colleagues in order to share good practice around teaching groups of students in a differentiated way. All teachers are expected to use item analysis to group students and routinely plan for focus group teaching in order to meet students’ specific needs. However, while assessment fully drives differentiated teaching in the lower school, it is not, as yet, fully embedded in the upper school. Each grade is housed in a separate wing of the building and closely managed by an assistant principal who is always very visible in his or her own area. All the administration team and their staff model good behavior to the students and build up close relationships across each grade in order to ensure that high levels of mutual trust and respect are maintained.

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 outstanding.

The school has exemplary systems for monitoring the quality of instruction and for developing teachers’ skills. These are based around open and very beneficial ways of sharing good practice using lab sites. A six-weekly lab site cycle, which always culminates in a celebration and sharing session, involves teachers in working closely together to try new strategies, evaluate one another’s practice and learn by the results. For example, at a session where differentiation and grouping was being discussed, a math teacher shared her strategy for using homework to gage students’ levels of understanding of a topic she had just taught. All staff are open to observations and

constructive support from colleagues, coaches and the administration team. They subscribe fully to this culture of learning together in order to provide the best education and maximize progress for the students. A new teacher confirmed that she had never felt so supported and that she had learned from everyone in order to help her do her job successfully.

This ethos of collaboration and sharing is also evident amongst all the support services in the school. The counselors, family workers, social workers and family worker function as a close-knit team alongside the other staff in the school. In doing so they ensure that the students and their families receive high-quality, well-targeted help whenever they need it. There is a mental health clinic on site to provide further much-needed support for families. The parents confirmed that teachers were always available to see them and that the administration had an “open door” policy in the school. The students stated that there was always someone they could go and talk to. The excellent Character Education program also helps students in the upper school deal with personal and social issues. The experienced Dean and his assistants ensure that the atmosphere around the school is calm and that students feel safe and secure.

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 well developed.

The school’s continuous drive towards improvement is made possible by the exceptionally effective planning undertaken by the principal and her team. They base their strategies for improvement firmly on the school’s goals, using data from all forms of assessment to successfully inform the planning process. The school’s three year plan drives all professional development extremely well and is broken down into quarterly goals which are time-limited and measurable. The vision behind the school goals has also been broken down into nine specific areas for improvement and focus groups and teacher-leader committees work extremely effectively together to monitor progress in their area. All groups regularly meet with the administration to revisit and revise plans. In this way, the decision-making process involves a greater representation of the staff and is very successfully communicated.

Planning across the school involves detailed pacing calendars, curriculum maps and monthly instructional plans which are closely monitored at all levels. Data is used initially to monitor progress at class level. All assistant principals oversee their grade level and download and discuss data with the principal on a monthly basis. Detailed action plans are drawn up as necessary to ensure support is provided where it is most needed. Checklists are used extensively. The weekly grade meetings involve rigorous discussions around test results and item analysis so that adjustments can regularly be made to plans. For example, the social studies curriculum has recently been revised because data showed that students were making inadequate progress due to low engagement levels with the material. The staff come together at a retreat at the end of every year to look at final outcomes and begin to plan for the following year. The entire school recognizes that all belong to a very professional learning community. The very strong vision of helping each student achieve to their full potential is a driving force for improvement to which everyone subscribes.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: George J. Werdan III	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