



**NYCDOE**

**Quality Review: Final Report**

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



# **Quality Review Report**

**The Willis Avenue School**

**Public School 049**

**383 East 139th Street  
Bronx  
NY 10454**

**Principal: Laura Galloway**

**Dates of review: November 8 - 9, 2007**

**Lead Reviewer: Marilyn Lehmann**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The Willis Avenue School is an elementary school with 670 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 29.5% Black, 69% Hispanic, 1% White, and 0.5% Asian students. The student body includes 18.5% English language learners and 14% 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 90.5%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding.

The school shares its building with two other schools. This means that some stairs and corridors are shared so the school has to work especially hard to maintain its own particular climate.

The principal has been in post for seven years. Student stability is generally good. However, teacher attrition has been high and the school has had a large proportion of new teachers each year for several years. This hinders the school's ability to see plans through to fruition quickly.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal leads by example, and is relentless in her determination to drive the school forward.
- Through observation and the use of data, the administration has a thorough and well-informed understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- The school provides a very rich learning environment which motivates students to want to learn.
- The school consistently conveys and maintains high expectations of its students and teachers.
- The teachers collaborate effectively to develop worthwhile learning opportunities for all the students and to develop their own practice.
- Students feel safe and well cared for, and they trust and respect their teachers.
- The school provides excellent professional support and development for all members of staff, including new teachers.
- The school's routines and procedures are consistently implemented and the school runs very smoothly.
- School leaders use assessment outcomes very effectively to inform strategic planning and decision making and revise plans as required.
- The whole school community is very strongly committed to enabling students to achieve as highly as possible.

### What the school needs to improve

- Continue to improve teachers' skills in collecting, analyzing and using data to monitor students' progress and to inform all aspects of planning and goal setting.
- Enhance understanding of the performance and progress of different groups of students, including analysis of data by gender.
- Develop teachers' skills in the use of technology to interpret and manipulate data purposefully.
- Further develop teachers' skills in differentiating instruction to better meet students' different learning needs and styles.

## 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 is tireless in her work to further improve the life chances of the students in the school. She wants every student to enjoy success. To that end the school provides a quiet, safe environment within which every student is expected to behave well and work hard. Excellent displays of students' work throughout the well-kept building help create a climate in which learning is everyone's first priority.

Data is being used increasingly effectively to analyze performance and progress so teachers have a better understanding of what students know and can do. However, some aspects of data use, such as analyzing performance by gender, are not yet being addressed. Teachers use assessment outcomes to inform their instructional planning, so teaching is better focused on helping to accelerate students' progress. Teachers are not all equally skilled, however, so the data is not yet being consistently utilized to best effect. The school has invested in technology and the principal is aiming for a paper-free approach to handling data. At the moment, however, not all teachers have the skills to take full advantage of the technology.

The school provides excellent professional support for all members of staff. New and veteran teachers are enabled to develop individual expertise and to share good practice. Teachers are mutually supportive and collaborate very well to plan and evaluate their instruction. More experienced teachers are particularly generous with their time to help and guide newer members of staff. A large proportion of teachers each year are new and the school gives very careful attention to meeting their needs so they can quickly become effective in their classrooms.

Teachers are very keen to enable all students to achieve well. Students enjoy their lessons and make progress. The school is working to increase differentiation of instruction to accelerate all students learning.

The school's inquiry team is established and has met several times. The cohort has been identified and the focus will be English language arts. The team is currently carrying out a detailed analysis of the identified students' strengths and areas for improvement in order to plan next steps.

The school has been addressing the issues raised in the previous Quality Review. Data is now used very effectively to inform strategic planning. Benchmarking provides a good time frame for measuring progress towards meeting targets for improvement. Effective use of data by all members of staff remains a work in progress, especially as the school has so many new members of staff each year.

## **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 collects and generates a range of data, including teacher assessments, and is using this increasingly effectively. It has a good understanding of the performance and progress of individual students and of groups. Special education students and English language learners are carefully tracked. The assistant principals lead on monitoring the different grades, while the principal leads overall. Teachers collaborate across grades and classes and are becoming more skilful in using the data to analyze specific needs.

Ethnic groups, including new immigrants, are also monitored. However the school is not yet analyzing performance by gender so has not identified possible differences in learning styles or any noteworthy trends in progress.

The administration regularly compares the school's outcomes against its own previous performance in order to maintain a good understanding of current progress. It also looks at the school's performance compared to that of other schools. Information comes from coaches and teachers who observe practice in other schools, as well through data analysis. This provides useful insight into other schools' practices and performance.

The school provides very good ongoing professional development which is effective in supporting teachers in their use of data. It is moving towards greater use of technology. Every teacher has a dedicated laptop and is encouraged to move away from dependence on paper copies. This is an area the school plans to develop further.

**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 teachers are developing their skills in interpreting data. They are beginning to understand the power of data to help them identify students' needs and plan strategies to accelerate learning. They collaborate to agree goals and generate plans. These focus on individual students, and on groups and classes. However, not all teachers are equally skilled in effectively using data to monitor progress and inform future planning.

Special education students are carefully identified and planned for. For example, the data shows that the school has been particularly effective in supporting the progress of students in the collaborative team-teaching classes. However, the school's plans to build on this success for its students are often disrupted. This is because students are moved in from other schools that do not have collaborative team-teaching classes, and they take up the available places. As a result there is not room for students the school planned to include.

The whole school community is strongly committed to achieving the school's goals to improve students' performance and progress. Parents, students and teachers agree that the school has high expectations. One student commented that the school wants them "to get smart" and "not do bad things to one another". A teacher explained it as "looking to be

the best we can". These expectations are strongly supported by the very rich learning environment. Classrooms and hallways are bright and alive with immaculately presented displays of students' work. These stimulate discussion between students as well as illustrating what they can achieve.

Parents are loyal to the school. They agree that the school is keen to involve them as much as possible and welcomes their opinions.

**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.**

Students have access to a range of activities beyond the core curriculum which help enhance their confidence and self-esteem as well as their skills and knowledge. Technology is integrated into the curriculum, with access to Smartboards and a mobile laptop laboratory for teachers and students to use. Fifteen classes are enjoying stimulating artwork with "Studio in a School", and other students are involved in "music in the brain" activities.

Teachers hold themselves accountable to their colleagues as well as to the administration for accelerating their students' learning. They frequently discuss students' progress with one another, as well as with the assistant principals. The principal rigorously monitors outcomes as part of her focus on improving teaching and learning, because she is determined that students should achieve as highly as possible. This is effective.

The principal is very flexible and responsive to teachers' needs in her staffing and budgeting decisions. She is careful to place teachers where they can work to their strengths which has benefited students and staff. Class sizes have been kept low so each student benefits from more personal attention from the teacher. Classrooms are well resourced, with access to Smartboards and laptops as well as manipulatives and leveled books.

Teaching is generally good, and some is very good. Students enjoy their lessons and most of them are engaged in their learning and work hard to improve. However, the impact of the use of data on instructional practice remains partial. Differentiation of instruction to best meet students' needs is an area that the school continues to work on.

**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.**

Teachers work closely together and are very mutually supportive. They discuss strategies and share practice frequently in formal and informal meetings, including "lunch 'n learns" and classroom intervisitations. As a result, pedagogy is improving.

Professional development is a strength of the school, which rises very well to the challenge of supporting many new teachers each year as well as on-going support for more established members of staff. Professional development decisions arise from frequent

feedback on formal and informal lesson observations by teachers, coaches and consultants as well as the administration. Teachers' requests are carefully taken into account. Coaches play an important and effective part in helping teachers develop by supporting individuals and modeling good instruction as well as facilitating opportunities to share good practice. In addition to general help from all their colleagues, new teachers are especially supported by the coaches and consultants and a school 'buddy'. Particular attention is given to enabling them to feel confident and function effectively in the classroom as quickly as possible. As a result, new teachers become effective quickly and are able to maintain and improve student progress.

The school runs very smoothly because effective systems and procedures are in place and are consistently implemented. For example, students' behavior is generally good because members of staff apply routines, including the "ladder of referral" system.

The school's relationships with support services and outside partners are good. Support services are in step with the aims and approaches of the school. Outside partners, such as Studio in a School, Lucille Murray and Mott Haven, contribute to the work of the school by providing in-school lessons and after-school programs, including help with homework.

**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 has agreed long-term goals and plans that are regularly revisited and updated. The effective Comprehensive Education Plan is constantly monitored and revised by the school leadership team. Time frames for meeting targets are provided through pacing calendars and by benchmarking expected progress across subjects and grades.

The school is agile in adapting its plans and practices with good effect. This is especially true at the beginning of the year, to take account of the impact of a high proportion of new teachers. It also uses the most up-to-date data to inform planning. For example, math plans based on the teachers' guides are adjusted in response to students' needs, as identified by assessment outcomes.

Data is constantly used to inform good strategic decision making. For example, assessment outcomes underpin decisions about staffing and resourcing. This has led to the determination to maintain small classes and to invest in enrichment teachers to support the drive to accelerate learning for all students. Similarly, the school has increased the number of leveled books and hands-on science kits which are improving students' progress.

The administration's excellent knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses is soundly based on relevant data as well as their professional knowledge and judgment. Together with the whole school community they are building on the strengths. The principal's fervent belief that "every child can and should do well" is known and shared by parents, teachers and students. The school has moved closer towards achieving that vision and has considerable capacity to continue to improve.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: The Willis Avenue School</b>	△	▷	✓	+	◇
<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 . . .	△	▷	✓	+	◇
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 . . .	△	▷	✓	+	◇
2.1 engage in collaborative processes to set demanding, 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		

<b>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.</b>					
<b>To what extent does the school . . .</b>	<b>Δ</b>	<b>▶</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</b>	<b>◇</b>
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?			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?				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 make 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		