

Quality Review Report 2008-2009

William Lloyd Garrison School

Elementary Middle School 031

**250 East 156th Street
Bronx
NY 10451**

Principal: Liza Diaz

Dates of review: November 5 - 6, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Chris Andrews

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The William Lloyd Garrison School is an elementary-middle school with 781 students from pre-kindergarten through grade eight. The school population comprises 28% Black, 66% Hispanic, 1% White, and 5% Asian students. The student body includes 13% English language learners and 13% special education students. Boys account for 48% of the students enrolled and girls account for 52%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 91.6%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 83% eligibility.

In the building there are three schools, which share the cafeteria, gymnasium, auditorium and yard. This arrangement has the potential to create scheduling issues for the administrators.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

The William Lloyd Garrison School is a popular school, which continues to develop under the strong and effective leadership of the principal. Her clearly articulated vision for the school is a key motivational factor behind its ongoing improvement. Students enjoy coming to school and find their classes both engaging and stimulating for, as one student expressed it, "We all get something that challenges our brain." This reflects the fact that the school now has very high expectations, which are shared with and by both parents and students. The school has made very good progress in the systematic collection and use of data to set both long- and short-term goals. These processes are well established in English language arts and math, but less clearly evident in all of the core subjects. Students are therefore able to explain very well what they have learned in some subjects, but are less assured when speaking of others. The development over the past year of the "Glow and Grow" sheets for most core subjects has, however, given a real consistency to the process of identifying students' next learning steps. Students also use these to set their own short-term goals and this is a positive encouragement to self-assessment and reflection. The goal setting process is not, however, consistent across all core subjects.

The focus on self-reflection is also apparent in the manner in which teachers approach their professional development. The administrators regard this as a very high priority, and provide teachers with every opportunity to collaborate and work as teams for planning or training. The school does set goals for teachers, but this process is still developing and the goals are not always clear and measurable. Parents are very supportive of the school and regard teachers and administrators highly. They particularly appreciate how well teachers know their children and the growing range of support they are given to help them become genuine partners in their children's education. The school rightly regards the continuing fostering and extension of the links between home and school as central to further student progress.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The excellent use of teacher binders to record data collection in English language arts, math and some other core subjects allows teachers to track students' progress and mastery of learning very effectively.
- There has been good progress in developing goal setting in the main core subject areas as evidenced by the consistent use of the "Glow and Grow" sheets to set short-term goals.
- There are very high expectations for both behavior and study, and these are clearly shared with, and supported by, the whole-school community.
- Students like coming to school because they enjoy their classes, are generally engaged by their instruction and feel well supported by their teachers.
- The administration regards the professional development of teachers, particularly new teachers, as a priority, and provides them with a variety of opportunities to address their needs.
- The administration fosters teamwork and collaboration throughout the school, both among students and teachers, and this contributes strongly to the personal development of all members of the school community.

What the school needs to improve

- Review the current data collection processes and investigate ways of extending the current good practice in English language arts, math and other content areas across all core subjects.
- Continue to develop the links between home and school, particularly in respect of student goals, in order to allow parents to become even more effective partners in their children's learning.
- Extend the existing good practice in student goal setting to encompass all core subjects with specific, time-related goals.
- Develop further the goal-setting process with teachers to provide clear, measurable goals in order to further enhance instruction.

Part 3: Main Findings

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

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do and to monitor the student's progress over time.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The excellent use of teacher binders to record data collection in English language arts, math and certain other core subjects allows teachers to track students' progress and mastery of learning very effectively. The principal has embedded into school practice the importance of maintaining the binders as the key tool for ensuring that teachers have a complete understanding of what their students know and can do. The school collects and analyzes data from a range of sources to identify student's individual needs. The analysis also identifies students who are most at risk or who would most benefit from additional support. The principal expects that teachers will then produce action plans to identify how they will provide that support. In this way, she ensures that data analysis translates into focused action for student progress. This process is very well established in English language arts and math, but data for both science and social studies, while less extensive, it does allow for similar analysis. In other core subject areas, data is less well collected or used.

The administration has used data well to analyze the performance of the different subgroups within the school, especially in English language arts and math. This has shown, for example, that boys and girls perform differently in different grades and this has led to interventions to address this issue. The data has also shown that the progress of English language learners has been enhanced by moving them from bilingual to mainstream classes after grade 3, with appropriate support services.

The school shares performance information with parents quite effectively, and they know about the "Glow and Grow" sheets, which indicate the immediate learning needs of their children. The school sends information home regularly, including three progress reports in the periods between the more formal report cards. Teachers also encourage parents to share their knowledge of their children to help provide appropriate instruction. However, communications between home and school is an area that the school has prioritized for further work, as parents' knowledge and understanding of student long-term goals across the different subjects is inconsistent.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each student's learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school has made very good progress in developing goal setting in the main core subject areas as evidenced by the use of the "Glow and Grow" sheets to set short-term goals. These sheets provide immediate positive feedback to students and indicate the next improvement step. The consistent use of these across all grades is very effective,

and students in the higher grades use such an approach to set their own goals and as part of the peer-assessment process. In many classes the sheets are displayed on the students' desks; elsewhere they are kept in easily accessible folders. It is a supportive process, but, as students indicated, is not yet practiced across all core subjects. It is also not yet common practice to have long-term goals, which are clear and measurable, in every core subject. Teachers have action plans to address individual students' needs, although they do not all have clear timelines attached. Teachers share the action plans with colleagues, so that there is a common focus in classes, after-school sessions or in class zero which is the first period of the day. Teachers use this occasion for students' individual reading and for conferencing. The school maintains further consistency in practice through the skill of the week, which provides a teaching point for every class. In this way, the administrators ensure that key learning takes place in every class.

There are very high expectations for both behavior and study. The school shares these explicitly with the whole-school community. Parents and students support them wholeheartedly. Students are ambitious for success and have the long-term goal of attending a good high school and then going to college. They regularly self-assess their work, and are encouraged by their teachers to be reflective about their endeavors. In one science class, the teacher asked them to assess their work as a team. Because of this regular practice, the older students are well able to explain what they have done in class and how and what they have learned. Parents do not seem as aware of student goals as they are of progress overall. However, the development of the 'e-chalk' website is one school initiative which is addressing this issue as this website allows parents and students to access information about students as well as assessments, homework assignments or details about school activities.

Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students' learning goals.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

Students like coming to school because they enjoy their classes and are generally engaged by their instruction. They particularly enjoy classes where they can collaborate in teams or can approach their work in a "hands-on" manner. A fourth grade science lesson exemplified this, with the excitement and concentration of the students as they dissected an owl pellet showing a real commitment to their learning. One student commented, "Most work is challenging, but based on things we've learned," showing that he understood how his learning is incremental. Lesson observations show that engagement and challenge are usual, although the progress made by students has not been as consistent as the teachers had hoped and they recognize the need for additional rigor to challenge the higher performing students. The principal has reacted to this last issue by establishing a special progress class in each grade, staffed by an experienced teacher, to provide this additional challenge. This is typical of the administration's utilization of resources, in that the identification of an area of concern, usually from the analysis of data, results in a timely response.

Resources are well managed, in terms of staff, materials and available space. The principal encourages teachers, as well as her assistant principals, to have an input into budgetary decisions and this gives them ownership of such decisions. The move away from Teachers' College reflected a view that the results did not warrant the costs, while the on-going investment in technology, particularly Smart boards, reflects the improved impact that this has on students' motivation and enjoyment.

The students respond positively to their teachers, as they feel very well supported by them. The atmosphere in most classrooms is respectful and committed to learning. The appearance of classrooms and hallways greatly enhances the climate for learning. Exemplar student work, complete with rubrics and the “Glow and Grow” feedback, provides guidance to other students, and a stimulating environment in which to study. Mutual respect and affection characterizes relationships between adults and students, which further encourages a positive attitude toward school and is central both to the school’s on-going development and to student progress.

Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals for accelerating student learning.

This area of the school’s work is well developed.

Administrators regard the professional development of teachers, particularly new teachers, as a priority and provide them with a variety of opportunities to address their needs. The principal uses the Santa Cruz continuum of teacher development to structure individual teacher development. She conferences with each teacher and discusses where their current practice places them on the continuum. This therefore has provided each teacher with a program for improvement, although this is not yet formalized with clear and measurable goals linked to the next phase of development.

The administration fosters teamwork and collaboration throughout the school, both among students and teachers, and this contributes strongly to the personal development of all members of the school community. New teachers have a mentor for their first year, with whom they meet twice weekly for planning and support. However, one new teacher explained, “Experienced teachers are expected to have an ‘open door’ policy for us, and they do”. The administration encourages all teachers to visit each other’s classrooms, and intervisitations are followed up with professional discussions about practice in grade or subject meetings. A recent example involved the formal visits to classrooms to observe the classroom environment and whether, in the principal’s own words, “there was substance in the classrooms – going beyond the pretty to show real footprints of learning”. As a result, good practice is shared and the quality of instruction, as shown by lesson observations, is steadily improving. Regular grade and subject meetings ensure that teachers are able to have an input into the school decision-making process, although the principal positively encourages teachers to approach her or the assistant principals with their ideas for school improvement, such as the purchase of a science resource package.

As part of the process of collaboration, the Inquiry Team from last year has been extended to target four additional low-achieving populations across the grades. Each team will be led by a member of the original team and will comprise teachers from the relevant grades. The importance of teachers having clear learning objectives for each lesson and the significance of focused questioning to test understanding are lessons that have been disseminated to the faculty as a whole.

There are many links with the local community and with outside organizations. The ASPIRA after-school program is tailored to the students’ needs and is aligned to the school curriculum. The dance, taekwondo, chess and basketball clubs provide outlets for student talents not otherwise recognized in school. Students in grade 8 undertake 25

hours of community service by acting as reading buddies for younger students or helping in the cafeteria. As with all other examples of provision for students, the principal reviews the programs and evaluates their impact on student development. The counselors lead courses in life skills and there are popular workshops for parents, for example on the use of 'e-chalk'. As a result, students develop both academically and as young people with a sense of responsibility to others, which is reflected in the purposeful atmosphere around the school in classrooms and hallways.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and 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 leaders regularly review student, class and grade data to monitor student progress against the whole-school goals as expressed in the Comprehensive Educational Plan. Teachers also review the progress of their classes and use the marking periods to set new, short-term goals. In English language arts and math, the assistant principals review the progress in their grades against the State standards, and use the appropriate scope and sequence documents for assessing science and social studies. In other core subject areas the process is less formalized.

The principal holds all her staff directly accountable for the education of the students. She therefore monitors teacher binders every marking period and uses this opportunity to discuss student progress and the teacher's professional development. She also reviews all lesson plans, both of the class teachers and any service providers who pull students out of classes. She passes information from these discussions back to classroom teachers, so ensuring that they have a full picture of their class's progress in all contexts. Mentors provide the principal with a log to show where they have focused their support. In this way, the principal and her assistants have a full overview of the progress of classes and grades towards school goals.

There is a very clear vision for the school, which is shared by all members of the school community. The principal is looking to establish a school where there is "academic rigor in an orderly environment that is conducive to learning". Much of this has been achieved as the climate for learning in the school has rapidly developed to its current state where all members of the community see learning as a priority. The principal's long-term planning shows that she has the strategies to move towards this, and the support in the wider school community for her work is undoubted. The introduction of the Santa Cruz continuum for teacher development has provided the framework to embed the growing culture of self-reflection among the teachers, while the administration's unrelenting focus on student progress ensures that all members of the school community have a common focus.

School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

School name: William Lloyd Garrison School	△	➤	✓	+
Overall QR Score			X	
Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do, and to monitor the student’s progress over time.				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty regularly...</i>	△	➤	✓	+
1.1 collect and analyze actionable information, including assessment results and attendance data, to provide a complete view of the learning outcomes and needs of individual students and groupings of students?			X	
1.2 focus analysis on the learning outcomes and needs of all sub-groups of students?			X	
1.3 engage in an open exchange of information with students and families about students’ learning needs and outcomes, including assessment results and attendance data?			X	
1.4 design or adapt tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance, identify trends and inform instructional and organizational decisions, and to enable students and their families to assess and track each student’s progress?			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 student’s learning.				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty...</i>	△	➤	✓	+
2.1 use collaborative and data-informed processes to set measurable, actionable and differentiated learning goals in core subjects for individual students and groupings of students and develop differentiated plans and timeframes for reaching these goals?			X	
2.2 use collaborative and data-informed processes to develop the school’s Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP)?			X	
2.3 ensure that the achievement of learning goals, and the implementation of plans and timeframes for reaching these goals, is the central focus of school leaders, faculty, students and families?			X	
2.4 communicate high expectations to all students and families, and involve students in developing their learning goals and plans and in taking their next learning steps?				X
Overall score for Quality Statement 2			X	

DEFINITIONS

“**Analyze**” or “**analysis**” includes, but is not limited to, comparisons of:

- the current and past outcomes of . . . individual students, administrative groupings and sub-groups of students and the school itself in core subjects;
- the outcomes of different classrooms and sub-groups in the same grades and core subjects; and
- the school’s Progress Report and other outcomes to those of peer/other schools

“**Assessment results**” include student outcomes on summative assessments (e.g., state ELA, math, science and social studies tests, NYSESLAT, Regents Exams, and Performance Based Assessment Tasks) and formative assessments aligned to the school’s curriculum (including Periodic, DY0, and teacher-developed Classroom Assessments).

“**Core subjects**” are ELA, math, science, social studies/history, the arts, foreign language, and physical education/health.

“**Data-informed processes**” include analysis of Progress Report, Quality Review, Learning Environment Survey, Inquiry Team findings, assessment results and attendance data

“**Groupings of students**” include classrooms, grade levels and high school cohorts.

“**Organizational decisions or strategies**” refer to a school’s use of budget and resources, staffing, planning, scheduling, grade structure, departments and teacher teams and other aspects of the school’s structure and organization that can affect student outcomes.

“**Sub-groups of students**” include special education students, English Language Learners, the other NCLB sub-groups, boys, girls, and other groups significant to the school.

Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students’ learning goals.							
<i>To what extent do ...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
3.1 school leaders and faculty deliver challenging and engaging curricula in core subjects, including the arts, that are aligned to state standards?			X				
3.2 teachers plan and teach lessons that are differentiated to meet the needs of individual students and student groupings and are designed to enable all students to reach their learning goals?			X				
3.3 school leaders make strategic organizational decisions to support a coherent and rigorous instructional approach that enables students to reach their learning goals?				X			
3.4 school leaders maintain a culture of mutual trust and respect and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				X			
Overall score for Quality Statement 3			X				
Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals for accelerating student learning.							
<i>To what extent do school leaders...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
4.1 use their own observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of student outcomes to implement an explicit, differentiated strategy to improve each teacher’s instruction, with a special focus on new teachers?			X				
4.2 encourage teachers to take part in Inquiry Teams and other structured professional collaborations (informed by the examination of student work, assessment outcomes and their own peer observations) and share in the instructional leadership of the school with the goal of improved student learning?				X			
4.3 provide professional development that encourages teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve student outcomes?				X			
4.4 utilize youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?				X			
Overall score for Quality Statement 4				X			
Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and evaluating each student’s progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.							
<i>To what extent do...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes and its strategies for improving each teacher’s instructional practices include measurable interim goals and suitable time frames for evaluating success and making adjustments during the year?			X				
5.2 school leaders and faculty use interim checkpoints and data to inform lessons, improve curriculum, differentiate instruction and revise student learning plans throughout the year?			X				
5.3 school leaders use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of and modify organizational decisions, structured professional collaborations and teacher improvement strategies?			X				
5.4 school leaders and the school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to support academic, personal and professional growth?			X				
Overall score for Quality Statement 5			X				
Quality Review Scoring Key							
△	Underdeveloped	➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed