

Quality Review Report

2008-2009

The Williamsbridge School

Elementary-Middle School 89

**980 Mace Avenue
Bronx
NY 10469**

Principal: Ronald Rivera

Dates of review: December 3 - 4, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Elizabeth A. White

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Williamsbridge School is an elementary-middle school with 1323 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 28% Black, 46% Hispanic, 16% White, and 10% Asian students. The student body includes 19% English language learners and 11% special education students. Boys account for 54% of the students enrolled and girls account for 46%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 89.8%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 83% eligibility.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

The school consists of a diverse community that reflects an atmosphere of reciprocal respect between students, staff and parents. While parental involvement numbers are low, the families that are involved are enthusiastic and have a high regard for the school and its leader. The school provides access to many services that provide academic and personal growth support for students and caregivers. A strongly embedded visual and performing arts program creates a vibrant environment throughout the school.

The school has made good progress in undertaking a more detailed analysis of data to identify strengths and weaknesses of subgroup populations. While the school has made significant gains in English language arts with subgroups in the lowest third a more focused effort to match data analysis with teacher development and differentiated instruction is not as strong as other areas of the school.

Creative scheduling has allowed for a high level of opportunities for collegial support utilizing a push-in/pull-out model. An energetic academic intervention support team supports struggling students and their teachers, however; the school has not yet established a more rigorous process for evaluating, monitoring and revising the instructional work of the whole school.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal promotes a school atmosphere of mutual respect that supports purposeful and meaningful learning.
- The school has made a concentrated effort to identify trends and promote success in student subgroup data by gender, for English language learners, special education students and ethnic groups.
- The allocation of academic intervention support staff and resources have significantly improved student outcomes.
- The school maintains a high level of collegiality and support amongst pedagogical staff.
- The school offers a wide range of curricular activities that support students' academic, artistic, athletic and social well-being.
- Creative budgeting and scheduling allows the school to provide a variety of partnerships with outside agencies that support the personal growth of students and families.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop the school's reflection processes to solidify plans for further improvement.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by providing professional development that helps classroom teachers to link individual student goal setting, differentiation of instruction and student outcomes.
- Formalize, with suitable timeframes, structures for monitoring, revising and evaluating procedures for teacher development, with emphasis on lesson planning and intervisitations.
- Increase student access and teacher use of technology to improve student outcomes.

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 school has made a more rigorous effort to analyze trends in student subgroup data to best meet the needs of these populations based on feedback from the last year's review. Overall trends in progress report data shows that the school has made gains in progress for all subgroups. The gains made were significant in English language arts for English language learners, and Hispanic students in the lowest third. Black students in the lowest third also made significant gains.

The school made a decision to change from designing their own periodic assessment to adapting NY START State assessment templates and using the citywide ACUIY periodic assessments to monitor student progress. The school has also made the decision to discontinue the use of the computerized data collection tool Student Achievement Manager (SAM) system to gather data. Instead, the school has developed a scaffolded guide protocol for the collection of actionable assessment-based data. This new protocol is not as of yet sufficiently developed, however, to enable teachers to use the process consistently and within suitable timeframes to enhance student outcomes.

The school has maintained an attendance rate of about 90% for the past three years and school leaders acknowledge that this is not good enough. They have utilized an automated messenger system that dials parents to inform them of student absence. Parents value this system and indicate their appreciation of the timely notification. In addition, the school issues attendance letters to families as needed, reminding parents of the importance and shared responsibility of student attendance between the school and the home. These measures have improved attendance by about 1.5 % to date.

The school communicates satisfactorily with families about academic expectations through their small but active parents' association as well as their parent coordinator. In addition, monthly student progress reports distributed to parents between the formal marking periods allow parents to know if their students are on track with their academic performance. Parents have also indicated that school staff is very approachable and accessible. They particularly noted that teachers and the principal make themselves available to discuss and assist with concerns. Parents also noted that translation services are available through school staff that reflects the ethnicities in the school community.

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.

School leaders collaborate with their academic intervention support team (AIS) to analyze data and set goals for the school. This “think tank”, so named by the principal, develops the school’s Comprehensive Educational Plan. This year’s plan sets goals for attendance, improvement in English language arts and math outcomes, and opportunities for higher achieving students. The integration of technology aligns with the school’s data. The school meets and exceeds its targets for those students moving from the lowest level. However, a continual challenge is for the school to move students to the highest level and maintain them. Identification of individual student goals linked with suitable timeframes to accelerate each student’s learning is not accomplished in consistent basis.

The school effectively deploys the AIS team to meet with student groups based on the needs of underperformers. The AIS team also articulates with teachers monthly to plan for next steps for instruction. The early childhood teachers administer DIBELS monthly and ECLAS twice a year to monitor progress for the youngest students. The upper grades use ACUITY periodic assessments to monitor student progress and are in the process of planning for the usage of the Achievement Reporting and Innovation System (ARIS) to enhance their understanding of student achievement.

Parents indicate that the school has set high expectations both academically and socially. They cite the assistance the school offers with the high school selection process as well as the encouragement offered to students to apply for specialized high school programs.

Teachers cite the process for dealing with misbehaved students through the deans, which they feel, is effective. The principal has a “principal’s club” for unmotivated underachievers in the upper grades. This forum allows the principal to directly articulate expectations to at-risk students and set goals that promote getting them on the right track.

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.

The school adapts the mandated curriculum to meet their needs to improve student outcomes via curriculum mapping. Although the school has a process for curriculum review that begins in May the full benefit of their efforts are not realized because the calendar for the process does not ensure completion in time for the beginning of the school year. There is also an effort to promote achievement in science curriculum by increasing assessment monitoring to support student outcomes.

The school offers Regents bearing courses in science, Spanish and math. An extensive arts program allows students to engage in music, visual arts, dance and theatrical arts.

The school also offers an effective 7+ program that supports the transition of overage, multiple holdover students to high school. The school collaborates with Harry S Truman high school to offer students credit bearing courses. Students note their comfort with approaching adults in the school for support. They may receive extra academic help individually in class, at lunchtime and in “am school”.

The school’s after school programs are highly attended. They consist of supplemental education services, Project Boost cultural enrichment program, as well as various clubs and athletic programs. Students mentioned that there are several after-school programs at the school but that they are not aware that they are available to students of all grades. Students also noted that access to computers in school is minimal. Parents voiced the need to “improve technology” as next steps for the school.

While the school offers numerous before and afterschool programs and robust AIS team support, differentiation as part of daily classroom instruction and individual student goal setting to improve outcomes for all students is not consistently applied in all classrooms.

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 proficient.

The school boasts of consistent low teacher turnover rates and confidence in the expertise of teachers on staff. There is no forum for new teachers as the principal has stated that there are no first year teachers on staff. The school provides professional development by assigning experienced F-status pedagogues to individual or groups of teachers. Upper grade teachers attend off-site professional development workshops. Teachers also utilize on-staff coaches for support. Classroom teachers meet regularly by grade and receive good support monthly by AIS teachers who are also familiar with the students they teach. While effective for teachers of the lower grades, meeting by grade level does not work as well for the upper grade instructors since they specialize by content. The school is considering establishing regularly scheduled meetings with other teachers teaching the same content. Teachers participate in intervisitations with colleagues but no formal protocol for this exists so it is difficult to access its effectiveness.

The Inquiry Team meets regularly and focuses on data for their grade 6 population because it is “a transitional grade where English language arts scores start to dip”. The Inquiry Team consists of AIS team members, coaches and administrators. The Inquiry Team lacks classroom teachers. This is a missed opportunity for teacher development and student support since classroom teachers directly influence student outcomes. Although there is some staff resistance to the new data technology the Inquiry Team’s school-wide goal is to implement the use of ARIS and to spread inquiry processes throughout the school.

School leaders meet with teachers twice a year to conduct a teacher performance review to examine student data and to determine next steps for teacher development. This process of teacher goal setting begins in December and many teachers have not received written feedback formally or informally as of yet. School leaders rely heavily on the AIS team for feedback on teacher development. School leaders lack a formal system for assessing teacher quality by providing timely and meaningful feedback early on in the school year to support lesson planning that reflects individual goal setting and

instruction that includes differentiation. The principal acknowledges, "lesson plans are schedules," and has set a plan for rubric-based lesson planning support. This support has not begun as of yet.

The school's parent association and guidance team are effective at providing opportunities of support to students and their families by utilizing services from outside agencies. The parent association contracts with an agency to provide curriculum seminars as well as parenting workshops for parents, teachers and administrators. The school collaborates with Bronx Lebanon hospital to offer mental health services to families in need. The 49th police precinct provides workshops for students with suspected gang affiliations.

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's assessment measures have proven to be effective when aligning academic intervention resources to student needs. Throughout the year, the school administers interim assessments to monitor student progress. They have used ACUITY for the first time this year. In addition, the school uses student portfolios to assess student progress at interim checkpoints. Portfolio entries align with curriculum maps and teacher performance reviews. Student products represent writing in English language arts, math, social studies and science projects.

Led by grade leaders, grade conferences serve as a forum for data analysis which support next instructional steps for each grade. Grade leaders, supported by the data specialist are required to bring the data to every meeting. In addition, AIS team members articulate monthly with teachers on each grade to review student outcome data. The AIS team is required to maintain logs to document support for each student and articulation with each teacher in their charge. School leaders occasionally review these logs. While the AIS team has a positive impact on student achievement, the lack of a formal system for administrators to regularly monitor the link between teacher development and student achievement results in a lack of effectiveness with revision and evaluation of professional development practices.

The school has created a template for data analysis, instruction and assessment called, "Using Assessment Data as a Guide for Instruction". This approach is designed to help teachers identify the areas of student need, remediate, assess, re-teach, then assess again. There is no system in place however for school leaders to evaluate the implementation or effectiveness of this protocol to ensure that modifications enhance student outcomes and develop teacher improvement strategies.

School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

School name: The Williamsbridge 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>	Δ	➤	✓	+			
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>	Δ	➤	✓	+			
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>	Δ	➤	✓	+			
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							
Δ	Underdeveloped	➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed