

Quality Review Report

2009-2010

Walter Francis White School
Elementary-Middle School 041
411 Thatford Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11212

Principal: Theresa Siegel

Dates of review: December 8 - 9, 2009

Lead Reviewer: Donald Conyers

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Walter Francis White is an elementary-middle school with 700 students from kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 77% Black, 21% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 3% English language learners and 18% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2008 - 2009 was 90%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

The focus on respect, responsibility and reasonable behavior has improved the tone of the school and increased the students' desire to be apart of the community. The school's STARR program serves as the core methodology for delivering socio-emotional support to students along with professional development for teachers in the areas of building trust and improving a respectful culture. Students respond favorably and attendance has improved.

Parents feel that good things are happening in the school and appreciate the information they receive about their children's activities and achievements. A new progress monitoring and reporting system keeps parents fully aware of student performance. Students enjoy conferring with teachers regarding their work products. Teachers use class goals and group goals to guide instruction for the class and other groups. This has resulted in greater focus on targeted groups and better academic services. While the school sets school-wide learning goals that reflect student need, it does not use benchmarks or interim goals consistently to gauge learning. This has minimized chances for adjustments. Students and staff enjoy the Core Knowledge curriculum and the 100 book challenge, which has caused a stronger focus on literacy across the lower and upper schools. Student test data shows that, as a result, literacy standards are improving.

The effective use of resources supports teacher teams on each grade who meet weekly to focus on student achievement and create curricula alignment across grades in social studies and science. Teachers develop individual professional growth plans and work with peers on learning projects and supervisors to improve their craft. However, leaders do not evaluate the goals set by teams and teachers, leading to missed opportunities for redirection and support. The school takes practical steps consistent with its vision and analyzes available data thoroughly to generate activity. This has led to academic support teams, behavioral programs, student study sessions and more teachers understanding their students holistically. Leaders have not taken necessary steps to ensure that school-wide professional development activity is focused on understanding how students learn best and how to use data analysis to improve standards of teaching. Students feel fortunate to be apart of a school that promotes excellence and encourages them to "dare to dream."

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school has worked collaboratively to create positive change in student attitude, resulting in behavioral and academic improvements across the school.
 - The school has made concerted efforts to bring all members of the community together to understand youth development, student engagement, conflict resolution and alternatives to negative behaviors. These have imbued students with a positive attitude concerning success and an inclusive need to create responsible change around the school. Consequently, behavior data shows a noticeable reduction in negative reports and unrest.
 - Students in the middle school are aware of their performance through data reports and demonstrate increased concern about improving by setting goals and working with teachers during STARR time to improve. This has sharpened the focus on student learning and self-improvement.
- School leaders and teachers collect and analyze a wide variety of data to identify trends and to improve provision, resulting in encouraging progress in student learning.
 - School staff analyze DRA, math assessments, science and social studies internal assessments conscientiously to create flexible student groups, appropriate plans and goals that support students' content understanding.
 - School leaders consult a master tracking system to understand connections and progress across academic and behavioral areas. Using this information, they effectively bring experts from various disciplines together to create a centralized focus on student learning.
- Staff aptly support students and parents so that students become independent learners who use resources effectively and make progress, as parents are actively engaged in their child's learning.
 - Teachers send parents progress reports, unit tests results and reflections from students about the steps they are taking to improve learning. This has created a meaningful partnership between the school and its families.
 - Students use rubrics, checklists, teacher comments and goals to ensure that they are making improvements to their assignments. During student conferences, teachers reinforce and teach new strategies which have promoted greater independence.

- Team members work conscientiously to identify student learning opportunities that have caused a shift in teacher and student actions, leading to more effective learning.
 - Teacher teams are examining the school curriculum to ensure alignment and depth from grade to grade in accordance with learning standards. They have also matched assessments to the curriculum so that the school understands student achievements and makes carefully considered decisions based upon new data.
 - The school has developed precise long-term goals in academic rigor, intervention services and student achievement. Monthly reviews of its actions, results and decisions indicate that the school is being increasingly effective in achieving these goals.
- The school has established effective and inclusive communications with parents, to promote high expectations and this has already led to increased engagement.
 - Parents are active members of the school leadership team where they learn about data review and engage in discussions about school programs and student results. Their greater understanding has inspired them to dedicate more time and attention to their children and school efforts.
 - Parents support the 100 book challenge and literacy campaign by working in classrooms on a regular basis to read with children. Teachers meet with parents to discuss student progress and to help parents support the initiative.
- Administration and staff demonstrate strategic and thoughtful use of resources to facilitate coordinated efforts that optimize student learning results and experiences.
 - In addition to providing common planning time, the administration has responded to data reviews by funding two academic support teachers who work with special needs students in literacy and math. Student results reveal improvement so far.
 - In response to the previous Quality Review the school successfully invested in literacy and math coaches in addition to the UFT teacher center leader. Their focused pedagogical support has led to higher standards of teaching.

What the school needs to improve

- Create data-driven, long-term goals supported by interim goals to consistently monitor progress and achievement across the school. (5.3)
 - Although the school's improvement plan delineates goals concerning behavior management, academic rigor and intervention programs, it does

not generate interim goals to determine progress; thereby limiting informed adjustments that need to be made.

- Teacher teams are working well to improve student learning and performance. They have set goals and planned activities for students, but have not yet consistently developed benchmarks that promote ongoing evaluation and change.
- Coordinate and improve formal observation and 'snap shot' reporting to teachers so that school level needs are addressed and resolved consistently. (4.1)
 - Teachers receive meaningful feedback from administrators which helps them to address weaknesses in their individual plans. However, school leaders have not addressed successfully the school's identified needs following their observations. This has diminished the ability to leverage the combined efforts of the UFT center and the coaches to improve teaching in central areas of concern.
 - The school has not consistently made teachers aware of needed teaching strategies to support school-level academic needs. This weakens school-level change practices.
- Strengthen all present efforts to regularly evaluate teachers' professional development activity so that all practitioners are accountable to adult learning that benefits the students.
 - As teacher teams continue to develop, the school has not formalized a suitable evaluative structure to promote team efficiency that leads to improve student achievement.
 - In spite of the breadth of support for teachers, the school has not looked deeply at how to assess and improve the effectiveness of these support services, thus limiting their impact.
- Magnify the need for teachers to convey what is known about how students learn best, to instigate more differentiated teaching strategies and to promote higher student achievement.
 - A variety of professional development sessions underpin a core set of beliefs within the Santa Cruz model. However, not all teachers provide rigorous differentiated tasks to ensure sustained student learning.
 - Inconsistent use of pre-assessment work with students has led to some students losing interest and not doing their very best. This results in limited support for some students and slow pacing and insufficient rigor for others.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2009-2010

School name: Walter Francis White School	△	▷	✓	+
Overall QR Score			X	
Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.				
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>				
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous and coherent curricula, including the Arts, for a variety of learners and aligned to key State standards?			X	
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best, and ensure that it is: aligned to the curriculum, engaging, and differentiated to enable all students to produce meaningful work products?			X	
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs?			X	
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 1			X	
Quality Statement 2 – Gather and Analyze Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, analyze and share information on student learning outcomes to understand school and student progress over time.				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>				
2.1 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the school level?			X	
2.2 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the team and classroom level?			X	
2.3 Use or develop tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance trends?			X	
2.4 Engage in an open exchange of information with students and families regarding students' learning needs and outcomes?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2			X	

Quality Statement 3 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently engage the school community and use data to set and track suitably high goals for accelerating student learning.							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of future development that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are understood and supported by the entire school community?			X				
3.2 Use collaborative and data informed processes to set measurable and differentiated learning goals for student subgroups, and students in need of additional support?			X				
3.3 Ensure the achievement of learning goals by tracking progress at the school, teacher team and classroom level?			X				
3.4 Communicate high expectations to students and families, engage them in decision-making, and promote active involvement in the school community?			X				
Overall score for Quality Statement 3			X				
Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals and student learning and emotional needs.							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
4.1 Use the observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection, with a special focus on new teachers?		X					
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?			X				
4.3 Provide professional development that promotes independent and shared reflection, opportunities for leadership growth, and enables teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve learning outcomes?			X				
4.4 Integrate child/youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations with the school-wide goals 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 progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
5.1 Evaluate the quality of curricular, instructional and organizational decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?			X				
5.2 Evaluate systems for assessing students, organizing data, and sharing information with student and families, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?			X				
5.3 Establish and sustain a transparent, collaborative system for measuring progress towards interim and long term goals and making adjustments during the year and over time?		X					
5.4 Use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of structured professional collaboration, capacity building and leadership development strategies?		X					
Overall score for Quality Statement 5		X					
Quality Review Scoring Key							
△	Underdeveloped	➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed