

# Quality Review Report 2009-2010

Washington Irving

High School M460

40 Irving Place  
Manhattan  
NY 10003

Principal: Bernardo Ascona

Dates of review: April 20-21, 2010

Lead Reviewer: Nancy Gannon

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Washington Irving High School is a high school with 1461 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 32% Black, 60% Hispanic, 2% White, and 5% Asian students. The student body includes 21% English language learners and 15% special education students. Boys account for 45% of the students enrolled and girls account for 55%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2008 - 2009 was 73.8%.

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This school is proficient.**

Washington Irving High School is in its second year with a new executive principal brought in to improve student outcomes and ensure the school move in a positive direction. To that end, the principal has made very effective changes, including revitalizing curriculum by helping departments realign their curriculum maps to State standards. This restructuring of curriculum is not finished but has already yielded positive results in academic success. In addition, the principal has set up structures for a leadership team to regularly monitor the alignment of curriculum, instruction, and resources so that all three are constantly employed to improve achievement. Although pedagogy is uneven at this point, there are pockets of strong differentiated instruction throughout the school. In addition, students and parents spoke positively about the changes in school environment in the last two years. The school has a generally positive atmosphere, although some classrooms were missing large numbers of students, especially during the morning classes. The school is continuing its work on attendance and has seen a two percent rise in statistics in this arena.

The school has developed a strong long-term plan that is aligned with current data and is well known throughout the school. In addition, effective short-term benchmarks are used to measure progress, which has led to focused interventions and adjustments to goals and practices. A school data specialist is working to help leaders analyze data to generate school goals and assess progress toward those goals, and this work has helped ensure consistent and effective outcomes. In addition, the school has developed excellent systems to get that data to teachers in formats that are useful for decision-making about instruction. However, teachers are not yet consistently using data to make specific goals for groups of students and as a result, student goals may be vague or non-existent.

School leaders have developed many teams throughout the school to ensure that teachers are focused on the significant work to reach school goals. Although teachers are energetic, teams are not consistently using an inquiry approach that identifies a specific instructional focus, and that can change practice to better support student outcomes. As a result, teams help individual students but their work does not necessarily result in the employment of specific successful strategies throughout the classrooms. The school offers a wide range of teacher supports, but at this time, there are not clear strategies for measuring the effectiveness of these professional development strategies in terms of its impact on student achievement.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The leadership team's thorough collection and analysis of data allows them to identify and respond to trends, which result in student progress.
  - The school's data specialist gathers a wide range of data, including scholarship reports, credit accumulation, subgroup data, and attendance data. He formats these different data sets to make the information accessible to the cabinet and other users so that they may clearly see trends and areas of concern. By creating a variety of accessible views of the data, he ensures that it is helpful in identifying where and how students are succeeding in the school.
  - The cabinet regularly uses a protocol garnered from Princeton Review in order to digest the school's data. The protocol takes the cabinet through a series of steps that end with actionable decisions in response to the data trends. For example, in response to data in the math department, the school invested time in the development of new math curriculum maps and they have seen clear improvements in students' pass rates in math classes.
- The school has developed tools for teachers and departments to use data to make essential decisions in curriculum and instruction to further student learning.
  - In addition to using an online grading program that helps teachers see trends in student performance, teachers meet regularly with a coach, who walks them through their data spreadsheet to understand strengths, weaknesses, and next steps. These data sheets highlight summative data as well as subgroup performance, and they effectively support teachers in planning based on student performance.
- School goals developed from relevant data are designed to accelerate student achievement.
  - The strategic principal, along with an energetic leadership team, has worked closely with a variety of data to develop goals that align with needs of students and the current reality of the school. For example, one of the school's goals is to increase credit accumulation, an area of need based on the progress report. The leadership team has used that goal to develop an action plan that includes better differentiation of instruction, as well as a focus on curriculum and goal setting. By supporting the overarching goal with ongoing action plans and teacher support, the school has shown significant progress in student achievement.
  - Every constituency speaks positively about the dramatic changes the school has experienced in the last two years. Students, parents, teachers, and the union chapter chair, all highlighted the principal's use of important goals to move the school in the right direction. The support that the current principal has inspired is a critical ingredient in the improved academic outcomes the school has seen and continues to see.

- Departments and school-wide teams continually evaluate curriculum and instructional practices, which have led to changes that support student achievement.
  - School leaders have developed a data inventory flow chart that ensures that regular monitoring of student outcomes leads to specific adjustments within resource alignment, curriculum, and practice. Ongoing monitoring of math outcomes resulted in adjustments to the inquiry teams' work, and adjustments to the use of technology within that department leading students' to greater academic success.
- School leadership tracks progress of long- and short-term goals and revises them as needed in order to ensure ongoing academic success.
  - The school's carefully developed goals are adjusted every marking period, as the leadership team looks at new data and uses it to understand how and where progress has been made. By working within a long-term plan, the school is better able to continually adjust short-term goals to move the school more effectively toward strong student outcomes.
  - Concrete interim goals that are set for each long-term goal are used by the school to project and measure progress toward meeting targets. For example, the school has a clear graduation goal, and a variety of projections about meeting that goal, based on data from the most recent marking periods and based on different scenarios. These projections help school leaders choose next steps to ensure they reach their goals.
- The development and alignment of curriculum maps, along with the articulated set of common language protocols, has led to better learning outcomes for students.
  - The school has spent a great deal of time deconstructing and reconstructing curriculum maps in every subject area to ensure that they are appropriately aligned to State standards and successfully support student learning. Although the work is not finished in every subject area, changes they have made in social studies and science have already resulted in gains in class passing rates.
  - School leadership has developed a document articulating "Common Language Protocols" that are school wide. These protocols work to institutionalize curricular structures and teacher/student behaviors that promote rigor and study habits, including Cornell notes, writing journals, and ongoing data analysis. As the school moves to implement these protocols consistently, they have already seen resulting student progress.

### **What the school needs to improve**

- Support teachers in further differentiating within classrooms to include a variety of scaffolds and instructional strategies that support different entry points, deeper engagement, and achievement of students at all levels.
  - Although some differentiation was evident in some classrooms, there was little evidence of teachers employing different instructional strategies or

offering different scaffolds and extensions for students on different levels. Without these forms of differentiation, some students struggle to find entry points for the work.

- In some classes, students are highly engaged, resulting in strong work products. However, this practice is not consistent school-wide. A general level of engagement across classrooms deprives students of a climate that cultivates their best work.
- Extend successful goal-setting practices of some departments and teachers so that throughout the school, relevant subgroups have specific goals that accelerate their learning.
  - Currently, the school has introduced the idea of SMART goals for individual students, but only some departments are using them in conjunction with relevant data. Within those departments, some students have set learning goals, while others still have broad goals like “study harder.” Because effective data-driven goal setting is not consistent, it is not yet impacting changing teacher practice or used for moving students forward in their academic progress.
- Use the energetic teacher teams to move the school to deeper inquiry work that targets instructional strategies that support student achievement.
  - All teachers are on at least one of the 35 teams that meet regularly, and some teams are clearly excited about engaging in this collaboration. However, at this time, not all teams are focused on analyzing student and teacher work in response to an inquiry question about the academic progress of a specific group of students. Because the teamwork is not yet this focused, teams are not yet developing targeted instructional strategies to help groups of students move forward in their learning.
- Develop clear systems for assessing the impact of professional development and leadership development throughout the school.
  - Currently, teachers are able to select professional development from an array of options aligned with school goals, including differentiated instruction, goal setting, and using technology. However, there is no systematic way to evaluate the effectiveness of workshops in terms of implementation or impact on student learning, precluding the school’s ability to accurately assess which strands have been most effective.
  - Similarly, the school has put great effort into expanding teacher teams across the school and has a vast array of teams at this time. However, there is no structure for monitoring the effectiveness of these teams on student learning, and so the school cannot be sure which are effective and which are not.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2009-2010

<b>School name: Washington Irving</b>	<b>Δ</b>	<b>➤</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</b>
<b>Overall QR Score</b>			<b>X</b>	
<b>Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.</b>				
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	<b>Δ</b>	<b>➤</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</b>
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous and coherent curricula, including the Arts, for a variety of learners and aligned to key State standards?			<b>X</b>	
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?			<b>X</b>	
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs?			<b>X</b>	
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?			<b>X</b>	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>			<b>X</b>	
<b>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.</b>				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	<b>Δ</b>	<b>➤</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</b>
2.1 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the school level?				<b>X</b>
2.2 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the team and classroom level?			<b>X</b>	
2.3 Use or develop tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance trends?				<b>X</b>
2.4 Engage in an open exchange of information with students and families regarding students' learning needs and outcomes?			<b>X</b>	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>			<b>X</b>	

<b>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.</b>							
<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				
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>				X			
<b>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.</b>							
<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				
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>				X			
<b>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.</b>							
<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					
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>				X			
<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
△	<b>Underdeveloped</b>	➤	<b>Underdeveloped with Proficient Features</b>	✓	<b>Proficient</b>	+	<b>Well Developed</b>