

# Quality Review Report 2009-2010

**William Cullen Bryant High School**

**High School 445  
48-10 31 Avenue  
Queens  
NY 11103**

**Principal: Aaron Perez**

**Dates of review: April 20 - 22, 2010**

**Lead Reviewer: Michelle Fratti**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

William Cullen Bryant High School is a high school with 3040 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 8% Black, 49% Hispanic, 15% White, and 28% Asian students. The student body includes 20% English language learners and 8% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2008 - 2009 was 87%.

### Overall Evaluation

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

The principal and his staff create an excellent climate that is welcoming and supportive to this very diverse community. The school makes good use of its analysis of data on student performance, progress, attendance and behavior to match programs to student need and provide support and intervention for individual students and groups that improve outcomes for students. Students say that they are engaged in their learning and the school fully supports their emotional, social and academic needs through a wide range of challenging courses, arts experiences, external partnerships, clubs, athletic teams and opportunities for tutoring. The school effectively uses peer leaders benefitting community cohesion. Students, staff and parents characterize their school as caring, safe and responsive. Ongoing and regular communication with parents in multiple languages keeps them engaged and well informed about their child's progress.

School leaders use data effectively to make purposeful decisions in student programming, the deployment of personnel and allocation of resources that effectively support the school-wide and department goals and meet the needs of students. Strategic decisions have led to a good increase in attendance for freshman and a much-improved rate of participation and performance on Regents examinations for all sub-groups. The cabinet works cohesively to review and analyze data to guide the school forward, but still lacks consistent protocols to establish and evaluate the effectiveness of professional collaborations and to monitor interim goals and benchmarks to improve outcomes for all students. This lack of uniform structures, with action plans to monitor and appraise school goals, limits the depth of the evaluation of key decisions that impact student achievement.

Teachers discuss a wide variety of data with their departments and there are two small inquiry teams. However, most teachers are not yet involved in formal collaborative structures to engage them in deep inquiry involving action research, whereby they test and then discuss the efficacy of specific teaching strategies with students having difficulties. Teachers have expanded their use of data to inform planning and instruction. However, the school is aware that the quality of differentiated instruction including the use of higher order critical thinking techniques is not yet consistent across all grades and subjects. There have been promising developments in collaborative activities, teamwork and professional development due to a recently passed school based option, which now provides additional time each Friday afternoon for teachers to meet. Staff now profit from varied opportunities to share key insights and best practices that are already improving instruction and outcomes for students.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal and staff work as a unified team to create a calm, respectful and orderly environment for learning to take place.
  - The Bryant Union (student government) is an active voice in the school. They visit classrooms to inform students of school clubs, tutoring, events and initiatives. This year, each officer serves as a mentor to an identified freshman, supporting their transition into high school. This student engagement has led to a good learning environment that supports social/emotional and academic development.
  - Multicultural performances celebrate the diversity of the school and the surrounding community. Afterschool clubs such as Global Kids, Tibetan, Greek, Bengali, Chinese, Korean clubs and Hispanic theater are well matched to students' cultural interests. A very successful peer mediation program, paired with respect for diversity, supports a safe and respectful environment.
- Leaders make informed and effective organizational decisions across all aspects of the school to support improvements in learning.
  - Based on an evaluation of data, the school purposefully changed the start time for students from 7:30 am to 8:00 am which has already increased attendance from 82% to 89%.
  - In addition to a robust after-school and Saturday tutoring program, the school has wisely increased their investment in a web-based literacy intervention program for English language learners that has accelerated reading comprehension. This is evidenced by the doubling of the number of correct responses on Regents-based multiple choice questions.
- The staff gathers a variety of relevant data across subjects to identify trends and patterns in student performance, progress and learning needs.
  - A spreadsheet analyzing summative data for the sub-group of students with individual education plans targets the courses and Regents (or Regents competency tests) each student needs for graduation. The disaggregated data identified a need for increased opportunities to practice and master writing skills in order to meet this goal. As a result, elements of essay writing were successfully incorporated into Global History themes and Fundamentals of Science classes, improving student outcomes.
  - An analysis of State math performance data of the incoming class, well supplemented by a school designed diagnostic tool, identifies the specific areas of strength and need so as to effectively guide student placement into algebra courses with differentiated curriculum maps and pacing calendars. In each course, a customized Acuity assessment effectively monitors student mastery of specific skills and promote greater achievement, accelerating student learning.

- The principal has established a learning community that is focused on student outcomes with a vision to accelerate learning.
  - The principal defines school goals from an extensive array of data. During cabinet meetings, there is discussion and ongoing evaluation of these goals. Assistant principals then meet with their departments to review scholarship, attendance and performance data and set departmental goals. For example, teachers in the English department periodically reviewed scholarship reports, Acuity and ARIS data, item skills analysis from the Regents, attendance reports and teacher input to refine course goals and action plans. As a result, the percentage of students who scored 65% or better on the Regents increased from 68.4% to 77.5%.
  - A review of state accountability data indicated that several sub-groups did not make adequate yearly progress due to low participation rates. To meet the school goal of improved participation, the principal developed a spreadsheet that effectively codes and monitors each cohort. Each department reviews the information with teachers and identified students are provided with opportunities for tutoring. Consequently, the participation rate on the English Regents increased from 72% to 85%.
- The school has partnerships with community-based organizations to provide students, teachers and parents with services for academic, social and emotional needs.
  - The school's external partnerships support the instructional program by providing additional learning experiences for students. A group of ELA students selects books, plan lessons and serve as reading buddies in two nearby elementary schools. This program raises the self-esteem of both partners and supports students' personal growth.
  - The school has collaborated with Global Kids to provide support and resources to staff, parents and students on preventing cyber-bullying to maintain a safe and inclusive school culture.
- Parents are key partners in their child's education and are kept well informed of school programs, and their child's needs in order to support their child's academic progress at home.
  - The school consistently communicates high expectations through an effective system that engages parents. Student contracts, course overviews, grading policies and progress reports, translated into the home language, are greatly valued by parents. The phone messenger system provides frequent updates about school and student progress in multiple languages. Parents have high praise for the new parent coordinator who sends informational emails and is credited with increasing parent participation on the school leadership team and at meetings.
  - Based upon parent input, workshops on ARIS, cyber bullying, financial aid, tutoring resources and helping your child succeed in school are provided during monthly Parent Teacher Association meetings. Additionally, to foster parent engagement and involvement, hundreds of

parents attend events such as Ramp Up orientation, Family Science Night and multicultural presentations.

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

- Expand opportunities for faculty to engage in collaborative inquiry work, thereby increasing teacher ownership of the key decision-making that influences student learning.
  - The implementation of an inquiry process whereby teachers engage in action research, select a target group of students, collaborate on utilizing specific strategies within their classroom to address student skill deficiencies and assess their efficacy is limited to two teams. At this time, the level of teacher participation is insufficient to facilitate the implementation of more differentiated practices and indicates that there are limited opportunities to promote shared leadership.
- Promote greater consistency in differentiating instruction based upon data, so lesson planning reflects purposeful grouping, differentiated activities and targeted questioning that maximize student learning.
  - Although some teachers group students based upon performance data and learning styles, teachers' ability to differentiate processes, tasks and products to meet the needs of all students varies greatly, from developing to expert. The school recognizes the need for ongoing professional development and continued monitoring to build greater consistency of teaching practices that allow students multiple entry points into the curriculum.
- Sharpen action planning by specifying student sub-group and teacher outcomes and formalizing interim benchmarks so that the school can monitor and evaluate the impact of key decisions on student achievement.
  - The cabinet has not collaboratively developed action plans that identify specific interim goals, timelines or benchmarks for all subgroups. Therefore, the staff is unable to regularly measure and evaluate progress in all subjects towards meeting the stated school goal of all new entering students earning ten or more credits each school year.
- Expand the use of data analysis to evaluate and revise, as needed, processes and programs within the school that lead to professional collaboration.
  - While inquiry teams and collaborative teams are now meeting regularly, the school has not yet established consistent structures for monitoring the effectiveness of pedagogy and capacity building with a clear focus on continually deepening adult learning in order to improve instructional practices throughout the school.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2009-2010

|   |   |          |          |   |
|---|---|----------|----------|---|
| <b>School name: William Cullen Bryant High School</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>  | △ | ▶        | ✓        | + |
| 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>   | △ | ▶        | ✓        | + |
| 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> |