

# Quality Review Report 2009-2010

**Wings Academy**

**High School 684**

**1122 East 180 Street  
Bronx  
NY 10460**

**Principal: Wayne Cox**

**Dates of review: April 13 – 14, 2010**

**Lead Reviewer: Jeffrey Soloff**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Wings Academy is a high school with 532 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 48% Black, 48% Hispanic, 1% American Indian, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 7% English language learners and 10% 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 83.5%.

### Overall Evaluation

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

A passionate, highly visible principal, who is concerned about the academic, emotional and social well-being of every student, is the driving force behind the success of the Wings Academy. The school has a well established academic focus and communicates high expectations to students and parents in a culture that exudes caring relationships between all students and staff. The principal states, "It's all about kids" while students rave about the principal's open door policy and that he is "someone students can talk to about a problem." Many partnerships with outside agencies provide academic and social support for students and offer opportunities for community involvement. Parents, students and the principal engage in an annual "Feed the Hungry" Thanksgiving event at which parents cook and students and the principal serve dinner to the needy. Parents are highly involved in supporting the school's activities and programs as well as its many reward programs that motivate students to attend regularly and succeed academically.

The professional development program has empowered the teachers, who provide most of the training. As a result, teachers are improving their pedagogy and students are benefitting from better instruction. Recent professional development on 'point of entry' has had a positive impact on instruction. Although teachers received training on differentiated instruction, classroom observations indicate that it is not yet a fully embedded practice in the school.

The principal's strategic organizational decisions are based on precise analysis of school-wide data and assessment results. The change to a two year program, from one and a half years, for Global History resulted in higher Regents' passing grades. The inclusion of more Regents' preparation classes in students' schedules produced higher scores and an increased graduation rate. However, the school does not have a structure in place to monitor and evaluate the class and subject assessments that are given during the year. Teachers do not currently utilize all the available data to provide instruction to meet the needs of each student so that their learning experiences can be maximized.

Although a teacher team is studying ninth and tenth grade students with deficits in literacy and writing, the analysis of subgroup data is not presently deep enough to provide the information that will have the greatest impact on student performance. Learning goals have not yet been established for student subgroups, so not all students can articulate what, precisely, they need to do to improve.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal makes informed and effective organizational decisions to support improvements in teaching and learning.
  - o Thorough analysis of all science laboratory data revealed that students were not all completing their required laboratory work, which prevented them from taking the Regents. The decision to double the laboratory periods from 1200 minutes to 2400 minutes resulted in 75% of the students completing the year's requirement in one semester. Almost every student will have completed their laboratory work ready to take June science Regents examinations.
  - o Administrators decided to change students' schedules to include more Regents preparation classes and after school sessions. This resulted in raised Regents' examination scores, a higher passing rate and an increased graduation rate.
- The school's numerous external partnerships, as well as their high level of internal services, provide students and families with extensive academic and personal support.
  - o Partnerships with hospitals, nursing homes and local businesses provide students with multiple opportunities to perform community service. These internships accelerate the social-emotional growth of students as they learn to assist others in the community.
  - o The Beacon program provides after school SAT preparation classes and tutoring, as well as physical education and dance programs to strengthen the academic and social growth of students. The program provides counseling to families to assist them in dealing with problems their teenagers encounter and to help them succeed in school. In addition, Beacon provides GED classes so that parents can further their education and get better jobs.
- The school communicates high expectations to students and parents for achievement, behavior and attendance that support the academic, social and emotional growth of students.
  - o High expectations are communicated to the school community through handbooks that are given to every student in September. The school requires parents to sign a receipt indicating their awareness of the goals and expectations for their children. The handbook makes students and parents aware of school programs and support services. Expectations are regularly communicated at Parent Teacher Association meetings, through newsletters and by guidance counselors.
  - o The school actively involves parents in the education of their children. Students are rewarded for their academic efforts each marking period at the school's Honors Dinner that parents attend. Academic trophies, awarded to the top performing student in each grade, "motivate us to

excel” according to one student. Through the school leadership team, parents are actively involved in the school’s decision-making process. A parent shared, “The principal always gives us a voice in the school.”

- The thoughtful approach to professional development is thorough, coherent and targeted to achieve school-wide goals and improve student-learning outcomes.
  - o Professional development opportunities are aligned with the school’s goals of higher order thinking skills and extending the use of differentiated instruction by all teachers so that the needs of all students are met. The principal believes the school should be reactive as well as proactive in order to provide the best learning environment for students.
  - o Teachers develop leadership skills by serving as turnkey trainers for professional development. Small group sessions empower teachers to work with their colleagues to improve pedagogy, and to provide higher quality instruction that has a positive impact on student learning outcomes.
- Positive, caring relationships among students, teachers and school leaders result in an environment that is conducive to learning and supports the overall growth of students.
  - o The principal models the caring behavior towards students that all staff exhibit throughout the school. Discipline and positive behavior in an academics first environment provides students with an extremely positive culture that the principal “is proud of.” Teachers feel a sense of camaraderie and their low turnover rate is the evidence of the positive climate they enjoy at the school. The principal uses the results of the learning environment survey as a basis for improvements each year.
  - o Students benefit from the close-knit relationships they have with staff members, who exhibit great concern for each student’s academic and social progress. The energetic principal, who has a strong presence throughout the school, knows every student’s name and expresses genuine concern for their well-being. A student said, “The principal really cares and he is someone I can always go to with a problem.”
- Parents have valuable opportunities to be involved in their child’s learning through regular and open communication with teachers and administrators about student progress.
  - o Teachers and counselors actively engage parents in their child’s learning using progress reports that provide information about student progress mid-way through each of the six marking periods. Teachers and parents engage in frequent telephone conversations about student learning and opportunities for support. A parent said, “Teachers call us often to discuss our child’s progress and they return our calls promptly.”
  - o Most teachers use rubrics that enable students to receive feedback on their performance and determine their next steps for improving their performance. Many students are able to reflect on their work and have a clear path for improved performance.

## What the school needs to improve

- Promote greater consistency in differentiation, based on formative data, so that lesson planning reflects purposeful groupings, students are challenged and tasks accommodate different learning styles to maximize learning.
  - o While there is evidence of differentiation in some classes, it is not yet an embedded practice throughout the school. Often, generic assignments are given to students with a wide range of ability that results in missed opportunities for some students to make enhanced progress. Although students are generally engaged, their lessons do not always reflect multiple entry points, nor do they consistently support or extend successful learning for all students.
- Deepen data analysis to ensure high levels of student engagement so that the academic needs of all students are met and accelerated progress is made.
  - o Although teacher teams are beginning to analyze data, individual teachers are not yet consistently utilizing data to plan data-driven tailored instruction for different targeted subgroups of students. Individual teachers are not consistently using item analysis to adjust their instructional practices. This prevents teachers from identifying trends, strengths and areas of need for their students and inhibits student progress.
- Establish measurable and differentiated learning goals for all subgroups and develop a system to monitor and evaluate progress toward these goals so that adjustments can be made in a timely manner.
  - o The creation of specific data-informed interim learning goals and benchmarks, across subject areas, in order to effectively measure and evaluate subgroup progress has not yet taken place. In the absence of focused student goals, teachers provide a generic experience for targeted students.
  - o Students do not all have a clear understanding of their learning goals in all subjects, thereby inhibiting their ability to focus on areas that need improvement.
- Create rigorous structures to regularly evaluate and adjust assessment practices to ensure that all available data is used to evaluate both the school's programs and the quality of teaching.
  - o Although school leaders evaluate student performance on report cards, there is no other mechanism in place to ensure that the analysis of other formal assessments is having a meaningful impact on student performance. In addition, there is no evidence that appropriate adjustments in instruction are occurring following the analysis of report card grades.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2009-2010

School name: <b>Wings Academy</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>