

Quality Review Report 2010-2011

Oliver Wendell Holmes

Middle School 204

**36-41 28th Street
Queens
NY 11106**

Principal: Yvonne Leimsider

Dates of review: March 22-23, 2011

Lead Reviewer: Dr. Philip A. Composto

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Oliver Wendell Holmes School is a middle school with 705 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 18% Black, 51% Hispanic, 5% White, 23% Asian and 3% other students. The student body includes 12% English language learners and 20% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2009 - 2010 was 93.6%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Students and their families deeply appreciate the school's focused efforts in creating a safe and respectful environment that promotes learning and supports their needs.
 - The school supports students' voice and active participation through the student government council. Student representatives from both academies meet each month with the principal. As a result, student activities are well planned, the school environment is very positive and student concerns are effectively addressed. For example, students highly value opportunities to plan and participate in spirit days which are conducted every Friday.
 - The school enhances student engagement through a Department of Youth and Community Development grant. Consequently, an after-school adolescent literacy program for at-risk students is available. This high-interest activity enhances students' social and academic skills as evident by their active participation in this program and has increased student outcomes noted on the quarterly pre and post reading assessments.
- The principal makes purposeful and effective organizational decisions that improve student learning and meet the school's instructional goals.
 - The school uses its resources effectively to improve the learning outcomes of all students. Therefore, English language learners and high need students receive English language arts instruction in groups of no more than fifteen students. These effective organizational structures and appropriate use of resources are well aligned to the school's goals. This has led to improved learning outcomes as evidenced by an increase on the scholastic reading inventory.
 - To support student learning, the principal hired two F status teachers, a science staff developer and a peer mediation coach. As a result, there has been an increase on the science unit tests and a decrease on physical confrontations among the students as reported on the Online Occurrence Report System.
- The school offers varied and challenging curricula including the arts, so that all students are engaged in their learning.
 - The school aligns its curriculum to State standards by effectively using scope and sequence guides, rubrics and pacing calendars that emphasize rigor and promote critical thinking across grades and subject areas. Grade teams, which consist of a diverse group of teachers, plan lessons and incorporate instructional strategies in order to close the achievement gap and meet the needs of all students. As a result, student outcomes have improved as measured by the periodic assessments.

- Each teacher uses common planning time to develop strategies to meet student needs. Classroom lessons involve the students working on the school's magnet theme and project based learning activities that are challenging and engaging. In writing, students work on a poetry unit. They research, analyze and create their own poetry. As a result, learning outcomes are increased as this activity engages students in more focused work since expectations are clear, consistent and published.
- The wide range of partnerships successfully promotes students' personal development and academic growth so that students succeed in meeting their learning goals.
 - The school has a long standing partnership with the Beacon program. Through the partnership, the school offers a large range of constructivist learning activities for students after school and on Saturdays. These activities include homework club and tutoring, drug and gang awareness, violence prevention, literacy and math classes, dance club and sports teams. Consequently, students enjoy coming to school and the school has developed effective relationships with the community.
 - School staff and administrators participate in professional development to promote positive student disciplines. The school community strongly believes in a respectful, familiar and compassionate environment. Therefore, students' social and emotional needs are addressed which has led to a 30% decrease in suspensions.
- School leaders and staff effectively use a wide range of assessment data that guides student grouping decisions and informs planning, resulting in a clear understanding of the performance of learners.
 - Teacher teams and individual teachers effectively use baseline assessments, end of unit tests, Ed Performance, teacher-made tests, and other common assessments that are aligned to key standards. The school's reading and math programs include a comprehensive assessment component which guides teachers' instructional and curricular decisions. Teachers use the assessment data to group for instruction and to modify lessons based on their students' academic needs. As a result, student groupings are flexible so that tasks are matched to students' learning needs and academic deficits are met by grade and subject.
- The school offers varied professional development opportunities that deepen adult learning with a common instructional focus on improving classroom instruction.
 - Classroom observations, walkthroughs and teacher conversations provide a coherent instructional focus and inform professional development offerings that support a consistent school culture. For example, all teachers are trained on differentiated instructional strategies to improve student learning outcomes and questioning strategies to increase rigor. As a result, all teachers are well supported in their professional growth, thereby increasing opportunities for improved student learning.

What the school needs to improve

- Refine action planning to develop interim goals and benchmarks for all target groups so that progress is measured, adjustments made and success evaluated for all plans.
 - Classroom teachers are engaged in collaborative teams and work effectively to share instructional practice, analyze a wide range of data, and plan instruction to improve student learning outcomes. However, newly formed teams are still developing their collaborative inquiry skills and evolving in their team roles. Consequently, teams and school leaders have not yet fully established long and short term interim measures for their target groups.
- Enhance goal setting for greater consistency in identifying short term goals targeted to meet the identified needs of individual and groups of students in order to increase learning outcomes.
 - Teacher teams use data to set goals by grade for English language learners and high needs students. However, the frequent use of English language arts and math item analysis to identify gaps in skills, and in-depth analysis of student work to set interim goals, is not a fully embedded school practice. Consequently, the use of specific academic interim benchmarks, to enhance instruction through appropriately targeted classroom supports and extensions is not consistent across all grades and core subjects.
- Promote greater consistency across the school in differentiated instruction so that lesson planning reflects purposeful groupings, challenging tasks and questioning to extend thinking and maximize learning.
 - Teachers plan lessons and use appropriate scaffolds to differentiate instruction in most classes in response to students' performance and interests. However, this is not a consistent practice across all subjects and grades. As a result, lessons do not always challenge some students, particularly high performers, to their full potential and instruction does not always fully address their learning needs.
- Improve the communication of academic progress and next learning steps with students and their families so that clarity of expectations will lead to acceleration of student learning.
 - The school provides students and families with interim individual progress reports. However, these reports do not specify students' next learning steps for improvement in their learning. Also, student work is available in well organized notebooks in addition to the bulletin board displays throughout the school and is used to celebrate students' best efforts and to inform instruction. However, not all student work includes comments for improvement. Consequently, students cannot always clearly articulate what they need to do to guide their improvement and accelerate their learning. Additionally, parents do not have sufficient concrete information about their children's specific learning targets to support academic work at home and to fully participate in the improvement of student outcomes.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2010-2011

School name: Oliver Wendell Holmes School	UD	D	P	WD
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>	UD	D	P	WD
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
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>	UD	D	P	WD
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 Align assessments to curriculum and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level?			X	
2.3 Use or develop tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize, aggregate, 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		

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>	UD	D	P	WD
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	

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>	UD	D	P	WD
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	

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>	UD	D	P	WD
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	

Quality Review Scoring Key

UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed
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