

# Quality Review Report 2010-2011

**William Cullen Bryant**

**High School 445**

**48-10 31<sup>st</sup> Avenue**

**Queens**

**NY 11103**

**Principal: Aaron Perez**

**Dates of review: March 1 - 3, 2011**

**Lead Reviewer: Veronica Yurcik**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

William Cullen Bryant is a high school with 3,102 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 8% Black, 49% Hispanic, 14% White, and 26% Asian students. The student body includes 18% English language learners and 12% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2009 - 2010 was 88.6%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is developing.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- A common, shared belief system supports instructional modifications that tap students' interests and strengths, improving their academic engagement.
  - Teachers share common beliefs in adapting to students' preferred learning modalities. Using learning style inventories regularly, they develop instructional modifications and alternative assessment options that help students demonstrate mastery. This has increased students' risk-taking in tackling those tasks that are most challenging for them.
  - Across classrooms, all students show consistent commitment to their studies by close attention to instruction and teacher directives resulting in conscientious efforts that enable completion of assigned tasks.
- Strategic administrative decisions support school goals for improved academic outcomes.
  - The principal's decision to enact a two-session school day has resulted in consistent improvement in school attendance figures across all grades. He also has included Special education teachers in department meetings this year, improving their understanding of specific content expectations in standardized assessment, informing revisions to their instructional program. In addition, they share instructional strategies with their general education colleagues to differentiate instruction better.
  - A school-based option has enabled all teachers to meet weekly on inquiry teams. As a result, teachers have the time to focus on their pedagogy and they express appreciation for opportunities to work cross-discipline. In addition, the school is piloting small learning communities, for ninth graders. Initial results show favorable outcomes in these students' grades as compared to similar students within the ninth grade cohort.
- The school successfully communicates expectations engaging students and parents in a shared commitment for educational success.
  - The school clearly communicates high expectations for full academic participation by its rigorous attendance and grade performance requirements. School athletes must maintain grades or are benched until grades improve. A college skills preparatory course within the English language arts period enables students to focus on needed skills and to have on-going dialogue regarding their aspirations for higher learning. In addition, the school holds an annual fair with over 75 universities and colleges, further making explicit the value of a college education.
  - Parents are proud of their school leadership team, noting the high number of parents and student members. They appreciate the principal's transparency in bringing school issues to the team. Students, as well, appreciate the school's receptivity to their ideas and requests. As a result, parents and students are invested in the school.
- The school provides a very safe and supportive learning environment that

supports its students' academic engagement and social-emotional well-being.

- Selected staff members receive professional development in Life Space Crisis Intervention, a recognized crisis intervention program. This has enabled staff to improve communication, reducing confrontational situations and consequently has decreased the number of school-wide incidents. The principal notes that he has seen improvement in the manner in which students express themselves during disagreements.
- The principal has made expectations for teaching and learning very clear and as a result, staff members assume collective responsibility for students' academic achievement and emotional well-being. One teacher summed it up stating, "It is my duty to make sure they all achieve." The union representative states that the "driving force" of the school is to "understand students as individuals." This sensitivity to students' needs is evident, as well, in faculty-run workshops that focus on academic cohort needs, management and environment, bullying, and communication and responsibility in real-life venues such as Facebook. The partnership between the Peer Mediation and Gay/Straight Alliance clubs produced a very well received school wide assembly on respecting others.
- Professional learning is a shared value promoting on-going collegial work, supporting changes in teaching practices that improve student learning.
  - Teachers' genuine interest in their students' progress has fostered a professional collegiality both within and between departments. A strong school mandate to "meet students where they are" and regularly scheduled professional learning times enable staff to work with supervisors and colleagues sharing effective strategies that improve their students' social and academic learning.
  - Teacher volunteers from every department form a collaborative professional development team, sharing responsibility equally with supervisors for making key decisions regarding school needs, leading collegial learning that supports school goals.

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

- Improve curriculum design to more closely align tasks to key standards and higher order thinking skills and to provide differentiated scaffolds so that all students are challenged and engaged across grades and subject areas.
  - Departments work conscientiously to align curricula to standards but academic tasks across classrooms vary in terms of rigor needed for successful high school completion. For example, procedure and definition questions predominated in one math class, while in another, students were asked to find similarities and differences, apply knowledge, analyze and synthesize.
  - Teachers group students and design activities to increase engagement; however, the use of student work to guide planning varies across staff members, limiting astute differentiation to challenge all students.
- Strengthen the depth of assessment analysis to improve identification of key needs required for effective academic intervention.

- While some teachers maintain portfolios of student work and reflect with students on their work to outline next steps, the practice of examining student work in planning instruction and revising assessments is a recent developing school-wide initiative. Thus, key data on students' strengths and weaknesses necessary to revise practice is not accessed.
- Teachers analyze Periodic Assessment results but do not identify trends within subgroups resulting in insufficient information for informed curricular and instructional adjustments needed to improve performance.
- Design tools that allow facile manipulation of data to identify key results and trends to inform strategic instructional and curricular interventions.
  - The school cabinet regularly reviews scholarship and other data reports to evaluate students' progress. However, this interval analysis is not sufficient to illustrate school-wide curricular, class, subject and or teacher trends transparently. Although a new online data system is beginning to provide better information, the school's current lack of systems to aggregate and disaggregate data hinders accurate measurement of progress toward stated goals and identification of critical needs to make necessary interventions for improving academic outcomes.
  - Teachers are beginning to use Periodic assessment tools, online grade books, Regents item analysis and are developing grading rubrics to evaluate progress toward student achievement goals in order to inform classroom instructional decisions.
- Improve communication systems so that students and families are better able to assess progress and articulate next learning steps.
  - The school trains parents to use ARIS parent link; provides regular updates from the parent coordinator and communicates grades six times a year. However, interim communication between marking periods varies by teacher and departments. Since these practices are not consistent school-wide, not all students and their families have opportunities for on-going reciprocal conversations about personal strengths and weaknesses and specific steps for improvement.
  - Although teachers speak positively about rubrics, the rubrics in use tend to be generic and do not always provide the specific feedback necessary to clearly inform next instructional steps.
- Improve performance evaluation to ensure ongoing feedback and differentiated support to elevate school-wide pedagogical practice.
  - Although supervisors write detailed formal observation reports, the implementation of the principal-recommended format of including data and student work analysis is inconsistent across supervisors. This, coupled with variation in informal feedback systems, reduces supervisors' ability to evaluate proactively and strategically support teacher learning.
  - While the school expects teachers, especially inexperienced teachers, to inter-visit and confer with buddy teachers, there are no set expectations or formal inter-department supervisory protocols. This limits the potential range of support to improve teachers' pedagogy.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2010-2011

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

**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>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
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?		<b>X</b>		
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?		<b>X</b>		
3.3 Ensure the achievement of learning goals by tracking progress at the school, teacher team and classroom level?		<b>X</b>		
3.4 Communicate high expectations to students and families, engage them in decision-making, and promote active involvement in the school community?			<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.**

<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
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?		<b>X</b>		
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?		<b>X</b>		
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?			<b>X</b>	
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?			<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.**

<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
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?			<b>X</b>	
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?		<b>X</b>		
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?		<b>X</b>		
5.4 Use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of structured professional collaboration, capacity building and leadership development strategies?		<b>X</b>		

<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
<b>UD</b>	<b>Underdeveloped</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>Developing</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>WD</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>