

Quality Review Report 2010-2011

The Willis Avenue School

Elementary School 049

**383 Willis Avenue
Bronx
NY 10454**

Principal: Laura Galloway

Dates of review: March 2 - 3, 2011

Reviewer: Yolanda Torres

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Willis Avenue School is an elementary school with 652 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 1% White, 28% Black, and 71% Hispanic students. The student body includes 18% English language learners and 17% 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 92.1%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school has a safe and respectful environment, which promotes positive attitudes that result in social emotional growth and sense of community.
 - Students feel comfortable and cared for by the adults in the building. The principal knows every student by name creating a sense of a close-knit family. Her commitment to the safety and well-being of each student is a trademark that all parents appreciate and take notice which leads their total confidence in the school leadership and faculty. They also indicate that the principal responds to them via email. This leads to a culture of trust and positive attitudes.
 - The school leaders have invested in the development of a safe and nurturing school environment where students engage in meaningful relationships. The emphasis on the social emotional aspect of students via service providers and community based organizations results in the students' increased interest in their academic success.
- The principal makes strategic organizational decisions in order to support student learning.
 - The integration of technology in all classrooms, inclusive of teachers with individual laptops, is evident of the leader's commitment to the learning needs of students and staff. Class size is at a small scale providing opportunities for teachers and other service interventions to focus and hone in on granular needs of students for improved outcomes.
 - Instructional coaches and teacher assignments align with the academic needs of students. Teams of teachers, including coaches, focus on small group interventions before, during and after school resulting in student academic progress. Consultants also work with English language learners to model ESL practice and better support the needs of this subgroup.
- Student data is organized in order to analyze trends to support curricular and instructional decision-making to accelerate student performance.
 - Teachers use ARIS as a data tool to differentiate mini lessons with specific teaching points in order to enhance students' knowledge base so they can accelerate their academic performance.
 - Individual teachers use Acuity to create item banks to address the instructional needs of their students. These decisions lead to improved student progress at the classroom level.
- Families and students receive ongoing communication on expectations that promote opportunities for family engagement.
 - The principal shares expectations with families at a variety of venues such as parent meetings, workshops, assemblies and one-on-one conversations. In addition to academic expectations, there are rich conversations on attendance and social emotional supports offered by the

school resulting in more positive relationship. Parents also leave with an array of strategies they can implement at home for further growth.

- Parents and school leaders discuss possibilities on how to increase parent involvement during the Parent Association and School Leadership Team meetings. This active participation of parents in the decision-making process empowers parents leading to their voices being heard and feeling part of a process with a sense of accomplishment.
- All teachers are engaged in the inquiry process to analyze student work resulting in student progress.
 - All teachers engage in structured collaborative inquiry meetings where teachers assume leadership roles. This year they are focused on the impact of inquiry decisions on classroom instruction. Teachers have naturally connected to the inquiry process via text-based discussions and ongoing reports to core members and school leaders resulting in a clear understanding how this approach impacts on student learning that leads to increased academic outcomes for targeted students.
 - Teachers use Acuity and other formative assessments such as conference notes and student work to identify grade and classroom trends. As they share their findings, they make classroom decisions on individualized strategies which result in improved student performance.

What the school needs to improve

- Design consistent rigorous tasks and curriculum for all students that are aligned to key State standards.
 - The school has attended workshops on rigor and questioning techniques to enrich students' learning. Teachers make instructional decisions on the content activities and infuse technology as a learning tool to enhance student learning and discovery. However, there is inconsistent delivery of rigorous curriculum tasks across classroom resulting in uneven student outcomes.
 - Teachers plan curriculum in alignment with the Common Core State Standards. While the curriculum reflects planned units in math for all grades, the school is in the process of developing standards-aligned units for ELA. Therefore, the school is at the developing stage in the development of rigorous and higher order thinking units for all levels of students. As a result, due to the inconsistency of rigorous instruction, not all students' needs are being met in order to accelerate student progress across the school.
- Enhance teaching strategies so that all students are engaged in differentiated learning opportunities that support their individual needs and higher learning outcomes.
 - The school utilizes data to form strategy groups to enhance students' performance and skill needs. Although teachers intend to differentiate instruction based on these needs, this practice has yet to be embedded across the school. For example, students work in groups; however, they all work on the same task. Consequently, not all students can engage in

higher levels of thinking in order to produce meaningful work products at their instructional levels.

- Teachers across grades share their students' needs in order to identify commonalities or trends. However, there is a need to outline instructional strategies and curriculum adjustments to meet students' needs at multiple entry points, in order to develop a trend of progress.
- Align the analysis of student learning to meaningful feedback with adjusted instructional strategies that address the areas of need in the classroom.
 - Teachers work with consultants to design their own assessments based on upcoming units and students' needs. Although students' entry points are taken into consideration during planning time, there is loose evidence that demonstrates alignment between strategies and student conferrals. Consequently, students' academic growth is limited resulting in uneven levels of engagement.
 - Although teachers collaborate on student work products, they do not consistently use Periodic Assessment data to supplement and provide a more in-depth picture of students' strengths and areas of need. Thus, the inconsistent use of data limits opportunities for teachers to identify students' strengths and specific needs for growth.
- Deepen the opportunities for teachers to receive feedback aligned to student assessments in order to promote ongoing reflection and professional growth.
 - As school leaders conduct classroom observations, they provide teachers with feedback to inform their practice. Although the feedback is matched to further support structures on focused professional development, the feedback is not rigorous enough to challenge teachers to the next level.
 - The school offers teachers an array of professional development opportunities such as study groups and "Lunch and Learns," as well as off-site professional development sessions. While the school provides opportunities in developing professional growth for all teachers, including new teachers, via consultants, coaches and Network support, this support has yet to improve rigorous instruction in the classroom.
- Create structures to regularly evaluate effectiveness of teacher teams and leadership development in order to support distributed leadership.
 - School leaders use protocols for observations with a focus on the classroom environment, student engagement, and assessments. Nonetheless, they do not have systems in place to support leadership development. Thus, there is no evidence to support teachers having a voice in school level decision-making.
 - Teams of teachers meet regularly to discuss student performance and ways to make improvements in their teaching practice. However, there is a need for a process to evaluate the effectiveness of teacher teams that will lead to improved academic outcomes, in order to build coherence between instructional practices and curriculum delivery.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2010-2011

School name: The Willis Avenue 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