

# Quality Review Report 2011-2012

**W.E.B. Dubois Academic High School  
High School K489**

**402 EASTERN PARKWAY  
BROOKLYN  
NY 11225**

**Principal: Catherine Hartnett**

**Dates of review: January 12, 2012**

**Lead Reviewer: Elyse Doti**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

W.E.B. Dubois Academic High School is a High school with 320 students from grade 9 through grade 9. The school population comprises 89% Black, 7% Hispanic, 0% White, 1% Asian students and 2% other students. The student body includes 1% English language learners and 10% special education students. Boys account for 43% of the students enrolled and girls account for 57%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 62.0%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is developing.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- Students and teachers have a warm caring relationship that allows students to open themselves up to learning experiences as they are given a new opportunity to develop a positive attitude towards learning in a safe, supportive environment. (1.4)
  - o Students expressed that they feel safe at school and that they feel comfortable going to counselors who arrange individual and small group targeted counseling such as new moms counseling and a counseling group for students that are new to the country. The school's new Attendance Team Challenge structure has a dedicated teacher serving as the attendance coordinator for small groups of students. Incentives and competitions between groups of students serve to motivate students and resulted in increases in the average daily attendance rates for students participating in the challenge. The attendance rate for students participating in the challenge increased by 2.25% compared to last year.
- The principal examines a wide range of data on student learning outcomes and identifies strengths, trends as well as areas of need at the school level. (2.1)
  - o The school leader regularly examines attendance, scholarship reports, State report card, suspensions, the Progress Report, the Learning Environment Survey, Regents scores and course pass rates in order to understand the learning needs of students at the school. One finding that surfaced was that the school had not been sufficiently serving a subgroup of higher performing students. To address the identified need, College Now opportunities were added to course offerings in order to address the growing population of students with advanced skills. As a result the school college enrollment rate of 23.4% is closing in on the city wide average.
- The school leader has a clear set of focused data based goals that are understood and supported by the school community and drive student achievement. (3.1)
  - o School wide goals drive instruction and focus on the advancement of student outcomes. Goals were developed from an analysis of needs and data from the previous year. Goals have been shared with the school community in a variety of ways including at staff meetings, assemblies, memos and display boards in the school building. Teachers understand how the goals were created and are able to articulate how their work on teacher teams and in their classrooms is helping the school achieve the goals. For example, one of the school wide goals is to increase the pass rate on the English Regents exams. The English department carefully analyzed previous exam results to identify trends in performance and have worked together to create templates and tools to teach specific skills aligned to the exam. The team used the results from the first interim assessment to help understand how to fine tune the templates in order to meet students' needs. As a result, on the second round of interim assessments approximately 12% of students increased performance on developing a controlling idea, thus indicating that students are more prepared to perform better on the January and June Regents than last year.
- The principal has made strategic organizational decisions around the use of staff and student time and technology that support movement towards the schools instructional goals. (1.3)

- o The principal sought out opportunities such as moving to a trimester schedule and being part of the I-Zone pilot to help bring necessary resources to the school to support credit accumulation goals. The school strategically modified the school schedule from a semester program to a trimester program in order to provide opportunities for students to earn up to 18 credits a year. In this structure, teacher teams meet weekly to analyze interim assessment results, discuss supports for students and in some cases recommend students for on-line credit accumulation opportunities. The use of online curriculum through Apex, allows students the chance to recover and make up course credits after school, before school and from home. As a result of using time more efficiently and bringing in further resources, credit accumulation for the schools neediest students has increased. Last year students who started the school year with 0-11 credits earned on average 3.24 credits for the year. This year, the same demographic earned 2.47 credits in the first trimester, projecting to earn approximately 7 credits on average for the year, nearly triple the previous year's results.
- A dedicated and experienced staff conveys high expectations to students and parents ensuring supports to achieve them which impacts students' attitude towards learning and student achievement. (3.4)
  - o The caring school community opens their doors to the neediest students in the city. Students of all levels including those with zero credits and zero Regents exams are accepted, embraced and held to the same expectations as any other student in the city. School leaders, teachers and staff members consistently communicate that despite past experiences, this school expects them to be ready for college experiences. The school works with NY Cares to provide Standardized Achievement Test (SAT) preparation classes and St. John's University Brooklyn Bridge Program provides students with opportunities to tour colleges, attend college fairs and assists students with the application process. In-house school counselors push the same college going message through programming students for college level classes and coaching them around college choices. College Now classes are provided as a clear indication of the school's priority to have students experience work at the college level prior to leaving the safe space of high school. As a result of this culture, nearly every student I spoke to described their college plan and understood that attendance and class work was the key to their success. The change in culture is obvious when examining principal suspensions. They decreased from 47 from September through December in 2010 to 12 during the same time period in 2011.

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

- Further support teacher's abilities to prioritize standards and instruction to ensure that academic tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher order thinking skills for all students. (1.1)
  - o Across all core content areas, the school has begun to embrace the Common Core Learning Standards through the development of units of study aligned to key standards. These units are scheduled to be implemented in the second trimester. In some classes, there is already evidence of alignment as students worked to analyze arguments in a speech by James Madison in US history class. During the first trimester the principal explained that teachers were focusing on the current State Standards and regents aligned tasks. It was unclear however what kind of guidance teachers were provided in figuring out how to prioritize the

standards and how to ensure that the assignments given to students promoted higher order thinking. Assignments and tasks across classrooms demonstrated inconsistent use of higher order skills particularly for students with disabilities. In one class comprised only of students with disabilities, the goal of the class was to use interpretation skills to understand the meaning of a critical lens. However, individual students were asked to come to the board to write up what the teacher was saying. Students were not required to think on their own or pushed to explain their thoughts. As a result there are missed opportunities to align standards to specific needs of groups of students as well as challenge all students to become deep, independent thinkers ready for the expectations of college and career.

- Develop greater consistency across classrooms in providing targeted instruction based on data so that lesson planning reflects purposeful grouping, students of all levels are challenged, and questioning extends thinking. (1.2)
  - The school has begun work to target the use of questions and purposeful grouping to offer differentiated learning opportunities for students. However, at this time, classroom teaching strategies, questioning and the use of purposeful grouping are inconsistently displayed across classrooms. In the classrooms visited, there were few examples of purposeful grouping, which has been addressed in observation reports. Differentiation across the board is still a work in progress. There were several examples of teachers using leveled texts to provide entry points for learners at different reading levels. However, the Common Core pushes teachers to think differently about supporting all students to meet the same standards through scaffolds and extensions. As a result of developing and inconsistent practices, students are not regularly challenged to think deeply and produce high level work products. Essential questions live in teacher planning documents but not in the classroom experiences, thus limiting opportunities for students to make connections between daily class work and big ideas, extending thinking on a daily basis.
- Extend the use of the observation process to ensure that professional development opportunities are meeting the needs of all teachers as well as promoting professional growth and reflection around specific school wide instructional practices. (4.1)
  - The school leader has worked hard to introduce the Danielson framework to staff members and has used it as a tool for short, frequent observations. The school has used observations to outline professional development around higher order questions, differentiations and assessment development. The framework is being used as an informal tool to build understanding around effective teacher practices. However, there was not sufficient evidence of teachers understanding of how to use the suggestions from the informal observations could be used to improve their practice. Some teachers expressed a lack of clarity around teaching expectations and hoped for more critical feedback. Furthermore, the observation process has not yet extended to include the analysis of student work and outcomes, demonstrating a missed opportunity to take a deeper look at the impact teachers are having on their students.
- Promote greater consistency in the use of on-going checks for understanding, rubrics, and student self-assessments in order to ensure that all students' learning needs are being met and adjustments made to curriculum in a timely manner. (2.2)
  - The English department supplements state exam data by examining periodic assessment data to identify needs and strengths across the school. They analyzed benchmark data to surface needs around student understanding of

- controlling ideas and literary elements. Their analysis however did not extend to identify strengths and needs of particular students subgroups. Therefore instruction remained broad based to address general needs as opposed to being tailored to the needs of various learners and groups of students in the school.
- o Rubrics are used across classrooms to help teachers share expectations for assignments. Rubrics are not yet used for student self-assessment purposes for to clearly understand next learning steps. Teachers use conferencing as the major strategy to check for understanding. In many classes students worked in pairs or small groups while the teacher circulated around the room supporting the learning and sometimes asking groups and individuals questions. It was not clear however, how teachers were documenting what they were seeing to provide clear data around what students understood. Similarly, while some teachers used exit tickets at the end of the lesson, the questions on the tickets were not always strategic or did not provide information to allow the teacher to understand what students learned in the lesson. Other classes ended with no summary of assessing student learning. Without clear, consistent methods for checking for understanding it is difficult for teachers to understand student needs and to make necessary instructional and curricular decisions aligned to those needs.
  - Refine action planning system for school wide, teacher team, individual teacher and student goals by developing interim goals, and benchmarks for all plans so that progress can be measured, readjustments made and success evaluated. (5.3)
    - o The school has a clearly defined set of school goals with an understanding of where they want to be at the end of the year. School leaders look at data at regular intervals to measure progress, however they do not set specific, targeted benchmarks to define exactly where they want to be by when. Additionally, teacher teams are able to articulate that they want to increase regents pass rates on the Regents exam, however, it is unclear how they are making progress towards this goal. Teachers are working hard with students in the lowest third through pull - out tutoring yet, goals for individual students or groups of students are not driving the work. Furthermore, individual teachers have not yet engaged in a self analysis of their professional practice to set goals for themselves. Without a clear system for setting and measuring progress towards goals at all levels, the school community is missing opportunities to allow goals and benchmarks to focus their work and drive their decision making process.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: W.E.B. Dubois Academic High School	UD	D	P	WD
Overall QR Score		X		
<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>	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 as evidenced by meaningful student work products?			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	
<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>	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, use on-going assessment practices and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level?		X		
2.3 Use grading policies and tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize, aggregate, and analyze student performance trends to inform instruction and curriculum?		X		
2.4 Engage families in school decision-making, activities and an open exchange of information regarding students' progress toward school and class expectations?		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.</b>				
<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 staff, students and families, and support students and families to achieve them?			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, guidance/advisement 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, with particular attention to the CCLS?		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**

<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>
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