

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

**George Westinghouse Career and Technical
Education High School**

High School K605

**105 JOHNSON STREET
BROOKLYN
NY 11201**

Principal: JANINE KIERAN

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Lead Reviewer: Jacky Grossman

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

George Westinghouse Career and Technical Education High School is a high school with 943 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 77% Black, 15% Hispanic, 2% White, 2% Asian students and 1% other students. The student body includes 1% English language learners and 16% special education students. Boys account for 75% of the students enrolled and girls account for 25%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 81.6%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Rich and relevant units of study propel students' thinking and offer them opportunities to experience depth that supports their readiness for college level work. (1.1)
 - The school has embraced the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and has focused strongly on ensuring students can craft viable arguments, recognize and develop claims and counterclaims and engage in close reading of text. Teachers in every subject, including Career and Technical Education, have begun to craft units to meet the higher standards. The English and Social Studies departments have led this work throughout the school and have created and implemented several rich interdisciplinary units that have not only incorporated argument but have also promoted instructional shifts that are models for the rest of the school. For example, the humanities team created highly relevant units on topics of interest for both the eleventh and twelfth graders. Readings of classic texts such as Romeo and Juliet, The Crucible and The Catcher in the Rye are accompanied by non-fiction treatises on adolescent angst and outsiders, and students craft essays in which they develop claims about adolescent issues over time, taking different points of view and defending them to one another. The school now also offers several advanced placement courses and a German class that is highly sought after. Career and Technical tracks, such as computer repair, multimedia and electrical technology, provide career preparation that is prized for its direct link to professional licensure and certification. Every student interviewed clearly articulated their understanding of the role of argument as a sophisticated intellectual and professional skill, across all subject areas. Student writing samples and work products show clear evidence that many students possess habits of mind necessary to be successful after high school.
- Resources are committed in both a reflective and proactive manner, ensuring that the needs of the school are supported by effective use of time and human capital. (1.3)
 - The school has significantly enhanced the use of instructional technology to support all kinds of learners via SMART boards for most every room. They have brought in additional coaching in math and literacy to support the shift to the CCLS, which has accelerated the pace at which the math and humanities departments have implemented more rigorous tasks for all student groups. Recognizing the need to progress further, the school is re-examining which career tracks they offer, and eliminating those that are less successful while researching others that have greater appeal to students. As a result, every student has experienced high level performance tasks in most academic areas, and student work products from recent months shared by students showed evidence of greater depth than those from the beginning of the year.
 - Recognizing the need to deepen teacher team work, the school revamped the schedule to ensure that every teacher of a core content area participates daily in team work. In addition to using this time to deepen CCLS and inquiry work, teachers also use it to turn-key their own professional learning, such as that from lab site visits run by the network. Students are experiencing more integrated curricula as a result of these teams, which are both vertical and departmental.
- The school has developed goals that reflect the appropriate urgencies and are driving many positive changes throughout the community. (3.1)
 - Structural, instructional, and cultural goals are all aligned, which is increasing coherence for students. For example, recognizing the significant needs of their

incoming 9th graders, the school has redesigned 9th grade literacy classes to incorporate a separate writing workshop that utilizes a curriculum focused on identity that is highly relevant to adolescents. This shift addresses several goals, including supporting writing, attending to student connection to school, and serving their lowest third of students. The school's goal of developing skills in argument is abundantly understood by all stakeholders including students and families. Recognizing the need to progress further, the school is re-examining which career tracks they offer, and eliminating those that are less successful while researching others that have greater appeal to students to ensure the future viability of the school. As a result of the clarity around the school's direction, students, parents and the majority of teachers are supportive of the many changes taking place, and that is accelerating the rate of progress in the school.

- The school fosters high levels of aspiration that has resulted in students developing ambitious goals for themselves and working hard to meet those goals. (4.4)
 - The school has successfully addressed previously existing concerns of student disenchantment with the support they receive and their resulting disconnectedness. For example, they began a 'girl power' group to help female students feel less isolated within the predominantly male school, members of this group share that this has given them more "strength" in their community and as individuals. College advising begins almost upon arrival to the school. One other significant effort has been a mentoring program by teachers, in which most every teacher has become a nurturing advisor to a cadre of students whose attendance and academic needs are benefitting from this extra attention. Students are keenly aware of the changes to the school environment and have stated that they are more excited to be at school now. Attendance has risen, incidents have declined, and students speak with pride about their school.
 - Appropriately chosen partnerships clearly support the mission of the school. For example, students can take college courses through the College Now program, receive additional counseling through Counseling-In-Schools, or participate in work-based learning through Construction Skills 2000. In addition, they can learn to ballroom dance or take robotics through other partnerships. Leveraging these and several other purposeful partnerships has enabled the school to provide opportunities for students that support college and career readiness, and in several cases, have resulted in students receiving scholarships, admission to selective programs, or serving as incentives to remain in school.
- The school's approach to ongoing problem-solving strengthens systems, structures and curricula, resulting in progress towards meeting school goals and student needs. (5.1)
 - The same thoughtfulness that characterizes the creation of school goals also characterizes the school's approach to meeting those goals. The principal's cabinet engages in ongoing reassessment of systems, structures and curricula by examining a wide range of regularly captured data including student work products from CCLS aligned units. The cabinet in turn guides the various department teams to make adjustments to curriculum or revisit key standards in coming units. A group of lead teachers spend time together over the summer planning for the coming year as well. Mid-course corrections, such as adding more complex or classic texts to a unit, or reorganizing Regents preparation tutorials, have strengthened opportunities for students to succeed.

What the school needs to improve

- Continue to strengthen teacher pedagogy to fully reflect the school's beliefs about how students learn and what motivates them to achieve at high levels in all content areas and across all grades. (1.2)
 - The school's pedagogy is becoming aligned to the rich curricular work they are doing. In particular, some classes in the humanities departments have begun to implement the Socratic seminar method, which has students engaging in meaningful, substantive conversation with one another, strengthening their content knowledge and improving their understanding of big ideas and concepts in literature and informational texts. Mid-year Regents results in these content areas have shown upward movement. In addition, technical classes such as computer repair and electrical technology provide hands-on, highly relevant, school-to-work experiences. However, at this time, instruction in math, science, and some humanities classes is still heavily teacher directed with little student voice in lessons, minimal differentiation to meet students' needs, and general questioning techniques that do not promote deeper levels of student thinking. Although the school believes that the workshop model is a beneficial approach to pedagogy, many classrooms do not fully reflect effective use of time within class periods, with the mini-lesson lasting overly long and time for student processing too short. Several classrooms remain strictly lecture oriented and are dominated by generic worksheets that do not require students to engage cognitively. Students express that they are benefitting from the changes made in their humanities classes because they are more involved, and have created opportunity to learn from one another, and they would like similar opportunities to interact in their other classes.
- Use the foundations of quality assessment to deepen best practices around checking for understanding and planning for instruction so that all students' needs are met. (2.2)
 - There are many rubrics evident throughout the classrooms and on hallway bulletin boards, however, often the rubrics are limited in their usefulness because they do not reflect expectations around content knowledge or conceptual understanding but instead focus on technical matters. Some teacher teams analyze the results of tasks using the rubrics and make modifications to tasks for groups of students, but this practice is not yet consistent in every department and every grade level, thus preventing instructional modifications, particularly for relevant subgroups, to occur often enough to benefit students.
 - Every classroom had an essential question for the unit as well as a focus question for the lesson posted, and exit tickets are a consistent part of each lesson. However, in some cases, distributing the exit ticket prevented the lesson from coming to a proper closure and students were still working through classwork when the bells rang. In addition, while some teachers are using the exit tickets to make generic adjustments for the next day, many are not targeting instruction for individuals and groups of students. Exit tickets are not always returned to students in a timely manner, preventing them from being used as a learning tool for students. While conferencing was observed in one academic classroom, in general teachers walked about the room during work time but were not utilizing what they were noticing to make adjustments. This is in contrast to the kind of highly individualized and performance based assessment that students experience in their technical classes. As most students interviewed expressed a desire to attend college and not to pursue their technical field after graduation, the lack of consistently effective assessment practice in academic classes is resulting in students not having their unique academic needs met in a number of classes, particularly in math and science.

- Strengthen consistency of feedback and support to teachers, to ensure that every department and every grade level have the same high standards of effective teaching. (4.1)
 - The school has begun to implement the Danielson Framework in its effort to both support and evaluate teachers. Plentiful observations have been focused on Depth of Knowledge, questioning, planning and differentiation. However, the quality of these observations and their usefulness in compelling individual teachers to improve practice varies from department to department, as does the level of follow up support and job-embedded professional development that teachers receive. Feedback given to teachers in science and math, for example, is often broad and relates more to classroom management rather than to strengthening instructional tasks, implementing college-ready curricula or raising the level of rigor. Some teachers within those departments acknowledge that they would like to receive more targeted support, particularly with respect to the development of CCLS assigned tasks. As a result, the quality of instruction and the levels of student engagement in some science and math classes are diminished.
- Increase clarity and specificity of feedback to students so that it can help students, teachers, and families work towards meeting short and long term goals. (3.3)
 - While school leaders are continually tracking overall student progress and there are systems in place for adjustments to be made to student schedules, course options, or credit recovery options, such as the creation of a double math period for seniors, a finely honed use of data has not yet permeated the majority of classrooms. Although some teachers have systems for tracking progress or keeping records of how students master daily objectives, the lack of targeted differentiation in classrooms reflects that they are not being used effectively to help students meet goals.
 - Although some teachers write thoughtful comments on student work and allow students to re-submit work to improve their grade, other teachers provide feedback that is minimally useful to students and parents. Student work samples shared by students highlighted this disparity, as work in some core academic classes was assessed with check marks or single word comments, while work in other core classes as well as the career track classes was highly specific, indicating precise next steps. Some students and parents express concern over readiness to handle college level work as a result. In addition, many students speak only in general terms about what areas they need to work on, as well as have difficulty articulating precisely where they excel, which prevents them from fully developing as reflective learners.
- Deepen and extend the work of teacher teams to ensure that the time spent collaborating has a direct impact on classroom practice and student achievement. (4.2)
 - Although the amount of time spent in teams has significantly increased this year, not every team is yet fulfilling its potential as an instructional force within the building. While teams do share pedagogy and some are beginning to use student work to center these discussions, some teachers are not applying changes to their practice. In addition, although some teams have developed their own leadership, there is not yet a fully articulated plan for truly distributed leadership as a school. Although the teams have definitely impacted some curricular changes and communication has improved tremendously, direct impact to students is limited to the work of a small number of the teams.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: George Westinghouse Career and Technical Education High 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 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	
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, 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	
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 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

UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed
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