

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

Booker T. Washington

Middle School M054

103 West 107 Street

New York

NY 10025

Principal: Elana Elster

Dates of review: January 10 – 11, 2012

Lead Reviewer: Esther Friedman

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Booker T. Washington is a middle school with 841 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 18% Black, 20% Hispanic, 49% White, and 08% Asian students. The student body includes 02% English language learners and 06% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 95.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school leadership has made a range of thoughtful organizational decisions that support individual and group instructional goals. (1.3)
 - A comprehensive and regular teacher team meeting schedule is in place which allows for teacher participation in multiple and varied meetings at least six times each month. Teachers engage in grade- and subject-level planning meetings as well as in other meeting formats to build capacity and preparedness and analyze student work for the purpose of formative assessment. This ensures that communication about student learning is coherent across the grade.
 - The principal has created a system of teacher assignment that ensures that ELL students receive instruction in content area subjects delivered by a teacher certified in that area, at the same time that they receive ELL supports. Additionally, she has created assignments that allow cross expertise to be applied between the general education, special education, and gifted programs. Teachers work with all classes to ensure that rigorous content is delivered to all students.
- Teachers design rigorous curriculum aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS), resulting in increased student work products. (1.1)
 - Existing curriculum maps have been modified by teacher teams to incorporate the CCLS, particularly for rigorous expository text, with the use of strategies for explicitly raising the level of critical thinking skills within lessons and in reading. Units are planned for use by all students in a grade, with supportive adaptations such as text level matched to student level and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) protocols ensuring that there is unity and coherence in the content received by all students in the grade band. This results in coherence and alignment across classes as well as across the core school program and the gifted program.
 - Planning by teacher teams is regular and ongoing and allows for continued revision of instructional plans to accommodate evidenced student needs. Teachers show evidence of supporting each other in this regard, including providing critique, sharing resources, and sharing observations of student response to instruction. Collaborative planning takes place in both formal and informal contexts daily and results in a corpus of lessons jointly developed and based upon students' individual and cohort response. Teacher teams have developed the CCLS pilot units and continue to refine them through the lens of student responses to this instruction and through analysis of student work products.
- The school engages in a set of transparent practices which structure differentiation of instruction and serve to accommodate varied student needs. (1.2)
 - Utilizing summative and interim data which is analyzed by teachers individually and in teacher team work, classroom and Early Academy

students are grouped by level to accommodate text level and instructional needs. This provides students with opportunities to participate in flexible groups which can meet their specific targeted needs.

- Teachers use classroom observational and test data to refine lessons and instruction on an ongoing basis, with particular attention to meeting differentiated needs of students through use of questioning. Teachers use the strategies derived from their training in Depth of Knowledge (DOK) protocols to move student thinking to higher levels. This results in rigorous levels of discourse and student work products that reflect critical thinking on the part of students.
- Teachers and administration actively work to ensure that curriculum is aligned to clear instructional standards and adapted to ensure engagement of all students. (2.2)
 - Assessment data is utilized to plan lessons, revise the curriculum calendar and the pilot CCLS units, as well as to create Early Academy groupings. Assessment tools are aligned to both the curriculum as well as the standards. Curriculum-based assessments are developed within the teacher teams to fully align with the standards-based curriculum units. This results in assessments that provide teachers with ongoing feedback that directly informs instruction.
 - The Early Academy provides targeted and curriculum aligned assessments to at-risk students and students are placed utilizing school-wide screening data. This allows teachers to adjust curriculum and teaching strategies in order to support all students, including those who struggle academically, to have their learning needs met so that they are able to participate in standards-aligned curricular content.
- The school has purposeful protocols in place that ensure that a safe and inclusive environment exists to support the social-emotional needs of the students. (1.4)
 - The principal has made strategic hiring and programmatic decisions including hiring two full-time guidance counselors, hiring of teachers who are knowledgeable about developmental issues in middle school life, a three-day orientation for students and parents on independence and ways to balance the demands of middle-school life and participation in Respect for All activities. As a result, the school enjoys a positive tone, attendance issues are addressed rapidly and daily, in-class pro-social behaviors are supported through established rules and parameters, and students are able to focus on instruction.
 - Students can articulate people and programs they can go to for academic and social-emotional supports within the school, as well as where they can go for additional attention, including in the Early Academy program. This results in reduced negative behaviors and on-going reinforcement of pro-social behaviors that support academic success as evidenced in the 2010-2011 Learning Environment Survey (LES) which reflect a score of 8.3 out of 10 for academic expectations.

- The school has comprehensive systems in place to communicate student progress to teachers and parents. (2.4)
 - The school has provided the Study Island on-line program as both a review tool for students and a tool by which teachers can monitor individual student and group learning. This information is one component of the data and other information, such as attendance and behavior, which is used by teachers to share progress with students and families. Thus, students and parents have a consistent platform available to them to be kept informed continuously about academic progress. This platform is updated daily and has functionality to list next steps for instruction and learning, which informs all constituents when progress is taking place.
 - The school provides a broad range of formats to communicate with parents regarding each child's progress, including formal and informal parent meetings, ongoing email communication, parent trainings in the use of the ARIS data system, and a comprehensive principal newsletter that is sent out weekly. This results in a school in which parents have multiple opportunities to understand their child's progress and learning patterns, as well as one in which communication about learning is viewed as critical to progress.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop a more comprehensive system for managing staff development that aligns more directly with improved student performance and meets the varied evidenced student needs. (4.1)
 - The school offers varied professional development formats, including attendance at network and vendor-led conferences. These are somewhat differentiated for teachers and decisions targeting professional development are made based upon needs evidenced by the teacher teams as well as by needs observed by administrators in classroom observations and in discussions with teachers. However, these do not include a systematic way to support feedback for the use of new methodology in the classrooms resulting in lapses in embedding new methods into regular practice to support professional growth.
 - Teachers have participated in network-supported events, such as the *Basic Writing* program and several related programs. However, there is inconsistent evidence that these are codified in such a way that they can be supported through observational feedback or used consistently in classrooms. As a result, some of the instructional capacity that teachers bring back from training events is lost or diffused because of inconsistent monitoring of carryover to daily practice in order to impact student achievement.
- Provide consistently differentiated professional learning opportunities to varied staff constituents in order to address specific areas of need in teacher practice and to build overall school capacity. (4.3)
 - The school provides specific support protocols to new teachers and teachers who need additional supports, including one-to-one mentoring by the principal or a peer mentor. However, there is no evidence that

differentiated professional development in specific content and methods occurs in a consistent and ongoing manner. Consequently, not all teachers are receiving specific support to improve their practice to increase student progress.

- There is a professional development plan and a yearly professional development agenda in place and the principal utilizes varied resources to provide professional development. Some teachers engage in opportunities to build their capacity in various instructional protocols. However, where individual teachers have learned specific programs such as Rewards Reading or Basic Writing, the strategies from these programs have not been consistently shared and generalized into broader use among all teachers. Toward this end, the lack of a protocol to infuse professional learning strategies systemically for all staff stifles opportunities for professional growth and leadership development.
- Put in place systems that more directly evaluate the work of the teacher teams and their impact on student achievement in the short and long term in order to inform adjustments to their work. (5.4)
 - The school uses a variety of data for various purposes, including class placement and placement in the Early Academy supplemental services program. Teacher teams use data to guide lesson development and unit planning. However, there are no direct links used by school leadership to determine what specific practices in the teacher teams are linked to student growth. As a result, tracking of the work of teacher teams is more focused on ensuring that it takes place rather than on knowing and codifying the classroom impact of the meetings, thus limiting opportunities to inform adjustments to improve instruction.
 - The principal provides oversight of and participates in the various teacher team meetings, and also offers feedback and redirection as needed. However, there is no system in place directly tied to student data analysis to evaluate the effectiveness of teacher hiring and capacity building. Thus, this impacts school leader's ability to evaluate the effectiveness of hiring practices and capacity building to support academic outcomes.
- Use student data in a more linear and transparent way in making organizational decisions aligned to the CCLS and instructional practices to increase coherence across the school to support student learning. (5.1)
 - Ongoing and regularly-scheduled meetings, including those related to response to intervention decision making, provide opportunities for flexibility in the curriculum that is delivered. However, there is not a consistent and ongoing assessment of effectiveness of these meetings over time based on student data. As a result, the administration cannot consistently build coherence to tie teacher team work to student learning aligned to the CCLS.
 - Teachers meet in horizontal (grade-level) and vertical (departmental) team meetings weekly on a formal basis and daily in various informal forums and the school leadership participates in these regularly. However, the feedback provided to the team members is based on observational information without explicit tie-in to student data. As a result, there is an incomplete line between practice and data.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School Name: Booker T. Washington Middle 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