

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

The Williamsbridge School

K-8 school X089

**980 MACE AVENUE
BRONX
NY 10469**

Principal: Ralph Martinez

Dates of review: November 09, 2011

Lead Reviewer: Eileen Waters

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Williamsbridge School, is an elementary–middle school with 1,375 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 28% Black, 48% Hispanic, 9% Asian, 14% White, and 1% American Indian students. The student body includes 17% English language learners and 19% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 90.8%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

What the school does well

- The school culture is evolving into a learning community that centers on the different needs of students to support their academic and social emotional development. (1.4)
 - With the adoption of academies and other organizational decisions, the school environment is transitioning into a safe zone where student and adult learning is emerging. Discipline is more structured with consequences in place, fostering student responsibility for their choices. Parents reinforce that their children are independently making better choices since the school has clarified the consequences. Students are afforded additional learning opportunities through clubs and academic supports that are increasing their learning, supporting character development, and increasing this year's attendance rate from 91% to 94.2%. Over the past year, parents have noticed a shift in their children's desire to attend school, becoming more involved in their learning, and look forward to coming to school.
- The school has structures in place that maintain effective communication with families and incorporate parents' voice in school decisions to build a common focus that supports students' progress. (2.4)
 - The school continuously shares various components around student progress with parents through phone conversations and online resources. Parents have regular access to their children's teacher and are provided with supports to help them become more knowledgeable in understanding their children's weaknesses along with strategies to use when providing learning at home. Teachers are expected to contact and document their communication with at least five parents on a weekly basis during which they discuss concerns around homework, exams, and/or class work, and share student progress. One parent told of the positive communication she experienced with her child's teacher regarding the progress her child made towards achieving an individualized education plan goal. Parents also use ARIS and other online resources to monitor their children's academic progress and attendance.
 - Parents, as active volunteers in the school community, participate in organizational decisions by supporting the beautification of the school, play a role in sustaining a safe environment, and utilize strategies acquired through Learning Leader trainings to reach an effective solution to real life problems. Parents' collaboration with the school helped in the final decision to develop academies that are impacting the school culture. Parents who attend 'Hello Cookie Day', which focuses on the transition into kindergarten for both students and parents, informs families about expectations and an understanding around what students will be learning.
- Through partnerships, the school has provided the school community with supports to equip faculty with strategies to address students' social/emotional concerns leading to an improved school environment. (4.4)
 - The school continues its work with external partnerships that provide the faculty with professional development around character development and peer mediation between students. Trainers, who provide teachers with strategies that are modeled in the classroom setting, help teachers to identify the characteristics of bullying and peer pressure in order to better identify and address potential

situations before they arise. Students participate in assembly workshops designed to address various social issues through real-life scenarios by engaging them in how to make positive choices when presented with difficult situations. Families are also involved with learning about successful strategies to build children's character and support their learning. From this work, both teachers and students are more aware and proactive towards creating a safe environment, and students are more capable and willing to communicate with members of the staff when they recognize bullying of students.

- The principal's organizational decisions have shifted the learning environment to build teachers' capacity and foster professional collaboration. (1.3)
 - As the school transitions its resources into a more technological focus, teachers are incorporating the use of SMART boards and speaker systems into their instruction to support the needs of English language learners and students with disabilities. The restructuring of the middle school provides students a choice in their academy and creates a sense of community between staff and students. Furniture requested by early childhood teachers has transitioned their learning environments to be supportive of peer collaboration, when assessing student work, and for students participating in group projects. The use of staff developers who provide support around data analysis, and consultants who assist with curriculum modifications, equips the staff with resources needed towards the attainment of the school's instructional goals.
 - With the reassignment of teachers into the appropriate license area, teachers are able to receive support appropriate to their field of expertise. Common planning times have teachers regularly meeting to discuss student work, sharing instructional practices, and gaining a common language around the curriculum. These opportunities foster a horizontal collaboration among teachers intra-grade, and are creating a venue for initiating inter-grade vertical discussions relative to curriculum and instruction.
- School wide goals created by the administration make up the foundation to increase student achievement through professional and pedagogical development. (3.1)
 - An improved school culture and current year work around setting measurable goals is an outgrowth of last year's work. In creating current school wide goals, the administration incorporated various identified school wide needs, along with new initiatives, resulting in a range of objectives, some of which are rooted in data and include an outline of actions to support their attainment. While specific goals are being monitored on a regular basis, such as the goal to increase attendance, others are still being introduced to the staff and action plans are emerging. The school continues to improve its culture and further develop the integration of technology into instructional practices, as they adopt novel aims to build professional learning communities, increase data driven instruction and embed the iZone model in order to increase students' progress. The faculty's ongoing gain of knowledge of the current goals, along with various supports and resources, assists in meeting set targets.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop standards based curricula that purposefully incorporate academic tasks to target achievement gaps and foster rigorous thinking so that all students are cognitively engaged in their learning. (1.1)

- At the elementary level, some teachers are implementing a uniform literacy curriculum while upper grades are transitioning into a new program recently purchased by the school. Teacher teams are in the process of redesigning tasks to align with the new learning standards and working with consultants to develop units of study. However, within the curricula there is a struggle to capture purposefully decisions that incorporate tasks focused at targeting the achievement gap of all students and subgroups of students. Academic tasks grapple with including challenges for high-level thinking skills and building rigorous habits that engage students' in learning. Consequently, the curriculum across the school leaves students under challenged and limits their academic potential to make significant progress for all students with a keen eye to relevant subgroups.
- Strengthen the practice of providing teachers with valuable feedback that captures their pedagogical strengths and needs so that effective next steps lead to enhanced instructional strategies. (4.1)
 - Teachers receive verbal feedback from the administration on classroom observations. However, written feedback from formal observations reflects inconsistent levels of sharing of suitable content that captures instructional practices, resulting in teachers struggling to improve their pedagogy, and precludes pedagogical growth.
- Embed a universal belief of how students learn best into instructional strategies so that pedagogy is purposefully differentiated and advances students' independent thinking in tasks. (1.2)
 - The school believes that students learn best from student-centered personalized instruction and engages learners in accountable conversations so there is ownership of learning. However, this belief is not yet alive across classrooms. Instruction that is varied engages some students in completing the same low-level task directed by the teacher, to student writers creating their own nonfiction book based on knowledge attained from various sources of information. Thus, this discrepancy in instructional procedures, and limited rigor of tasks, impedes the learning process for all students.
- Develop a variety of assessment practices so that teachers use data to enhance the curriculum and target students' instructional needs to increase student achievement. (2.2)
 - Teachers' receipt of data binders prepared by the school, and support from a staff developer to identify the push-able and slide-able students based on results from State exams, provided teachers with a realization. Consequently, they now understand how close some students are to achieving the next level. Other teachers comfortably manipulate a variety of classroom level data to group students and target needs through instruction. Rubrics are utilized to measure student task performance; however, the rubrics are not aligned with the rigor of the new learning standards nor are they used to share feedback around curriculum and to inform pedagogical decision-making. Although the school has various entry points for their utilization of assessment practices, these practices are inconsistent across the school and struggle to be purposefully used to gather data around instructional practices that lead to modifications impacting students' learning.
 - The use of on going assessments during classroom instruction to modify the curriculum and pedagogy differs across teachers. As a new iZone school, some

classes have adopted a 'parking lot' where students leave notes with their ideas or questions regarding a lesson. During a math lesson, the teacher often checked in with students through verbal prompts and purposefully selection of students to answer questions that resulted in immediate instructional adjustments to make sure all students meet the objective and reflected on their understanding. In other classrooms, on going checks for learning were not sufficiently evident, leaving some students compliant to the task and inadequately challenged to increase their level of thinking.

- Improve the monitoring structures of teacher teams, and the evaluation of teachers through the use of data, to make informed decisions that accelerate student learning. (5.4)
 - Many of the monitoring structures in place are centered on formal and informal conversations among the staff. Teacher leaders meet with the administration and share minutes from various meetings in order to monitor the progress of teams. However, these monitoring structures have not yet yielded adjustments to the collaborative work of teacher teams so that student-learning needs are more purposefully addressed.
 - Based on discussions among the administrative team, it was agreed that the previous observation practices were not meeting the needs of teachers and thus administration has begun to adopt a new focus to strengthen capacity building. However, as analysis of student data is not currently part of the monitoring practice for teacher evaluations and capacity building, the system is ineffective at pinpointing areas of pedagogical weaknesses that necessitate further help and revision.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: The Williamsbridge 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
-----------	-----------------------	----------	-------------------	----------	-------------------	-----------	-----------------------