

# **Quality Review Report 2012-2013**

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

**High School 489**

**402 EASTERN PARKWAY  
BROOKLYN  
NY, 11225**

**Principal: Catherine Hartnett**

**Dates of review: March 18 - 19, 2013**

**Lead Reviewer: Karen Watts**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

W.E.B. Dubois Academic High School is a transfer High school with 199 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 94% Black, 4% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 1% English language learners and 11% special education students. Boys account for 46% of the students enrolled and girls account for 54%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 65.2%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is proficient.**

### What the school does well

- Students benefit from strong and consistent instructional practices, including self-paced individualized instruction, resulting in the development of their higher order thinking skills through their engagement in, and mastery of challenging tasks. (1.2)
  - The school believes in self-paced individualized instruction taught through an adapted workshop model in a blended classroom. The school's participation in the iZone has afforded it the opportunity to have most of its courses online with the teachers providing individualized supports to students in the classroom and even the after school tutoring is a combination of face-to-face and online work. This allows multiple entry points into the curriculum based on students' interests, reading levels and other learning needs. Students have opportunities to make up work that they may have missed and to advance if they need or want to. Teachers have become adept at presenting the concepts in multiple ways through videos, the reading of complex texts and interesting articles, using evidence to reason and engage students in discussions and to write critically using various writing templates resulting in essays and research papers written in Modern Language Association (MLA) styles. Teachers have become proficient in ensuring that the questions they ask in the classroom are aligned to the Levels 3 and 4 of the depth of knowledge (DOK) and credits their development in the competencies of the Danielson framework in improving the quality of instruction, in increasing students' engagement in their lessons, and resulting in student work products of high quality.
- Teachers use the results from common rubrics that assess students on key literacy standards and the results of students' self-assessments to adjust curriculum and instruction to meet students' learning needs and improve their learning outcomes. (2.2)
  - All teachers begin each unit with diagnostic testing to ascertain students present performance due to the fact that in many cases students may have taken and failed the same course at a previous school. Instruction is then tailored to address the needs that surfaces on the diagnostics tests. Teachers also use the results of daily assessments in the classroom and information from student work products to constantly tweak their lessons to ensure delivery to meet students' needs. Units always end in projects that are often interdisciplinary, and ask students to demonstrate what they learned. Diagnostic, formative and summative assessments are all Regent based so students know how they are making progress on the standards that are tested on the Regents. Teachers and students used the Regent rubrics with Regent-type questions and use school wide teacher developed rubrics when assessing the key standards that the school is focused on. Teachers also use the rubrics when conferencing with students to check for understanding and students use the rubrics along with exemplars when they assess their own work or that of their peers. These instructional practices support students' engagement in and ownership of their learning resulting in students' increasing mastery of the curriculum.

- The principal strategically uses the school's resources and makes organizational decisions that support the attainment of the school's instructional goals resulting in improvements in teacher practice and student learning. (1.3)
  - The principal is on a mission to improve the school's curriculum and teacher practice relative to the delivery of instruction, thus improving students' academic outcomes. She works to ensure that all curricula are universally designed for learning (UDL) and are online to meet the needs of all students. She leverages the strengths of the administration so that one member is responsible for math, science, programming, data, and testing, and another is responsible for guidance, the community based organizations (CBOs), special education, gym, and attendance, while another administrator oversees social studies, English, and art. Additionally, the lead teacher in each department supports teacher development through weekly subject team meetings. The principal also skillfully seeks out community resources to enhance the students' experiences at the school and improve students learning. Nearby Medgar Evers College provides tutors who push into classrooms to provide small group instruction and provides counselors to support the work of the school's guidance counselor and advisors. The iZone has been a strong partner by providing "tons" of technology that ensures the individualized learning that the school believes in. As a result, teacher practice has improved so far this school year with more teachers receiving effective ratings on the Danielson competencies and more students are passing classes and accumulating credits towards graduation requirements.
- School leaders provide frequent targeted feedback to teachers using a school-wide teaching framework and design and implement effective supports to improve teachers' instructional practice. (4.1)
  - School leaders conduct cycles of observation based on the Danielson Framework for teaching, and provided professional development (PD) in the Danielson Competencies and the Citywide Instructional Expectations (CIE) at the start of the school year in order to set uniform understanding of effective teaching. Teachers assessed where they were in each competency and set goals with administrators for improvement as needed. The administrators normed their classroom observations to the Danielson framework so that they were all on the same page in giving feedback. After each round of observation, this targeted feedback identified for teachers areas for growth and PD was provided to improve teachers' practice. So far this school year, PD has been provided in questioning, development of assessments, UDL, the use of the depth of knowledge, Blended Learning, and the very important how-tos of translating the Citywide instructional Expectations into classroom practice. As a result, teachers are now demonstrating proficiency in questioning techniques by asking open-ended questions to generate thinking, and closed-ended questions to check for understanding. Furthermore, all teachers have moved in a positive direction in all of the competencies that were emphasized this school year and more importantly, students are demonstrating higher order thinking skills in their discussions and written work products.

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

- Enhance the curriculum by offering advanced courses and exposure to careers so that students graduate college and career ready to increase their postsecondary success. (1.1)
  - The school's curriculum has been strategically aligned to both the Common Core and State standards and the school has identified common core aligned reading and writing and academic vocabulary as

key standards to focus on across subject areas. In Living Environment, students have researched stem cell and argue to support or ban it, have researched genetically modified foods and argue to support or ban its use. In United States history students have argued in support or non-support of Andrew Jackson being on the \$20 bill and in social studies teachers have shifted away from using the textbooks to having students closely read primary sources and other historical documents as they answer text dependent questions. Consequently, all performance tasks are referenced to the Webb's depth of knowledge (DOK) to ensure that they are rigorous. Some students take Algebra II and Trigonometry and have access to College Now classes at Mercy College, however, students are not yet exposed to higher-level science courses such as chemistry or physics or to advanced placement courses that would further enhance their preparation for college level work nor are they exposed to sequences of courses in languages other than English. Additionally, most students are not exposed to internships that would illuminate pathways to careers. As a result, the school's curriculum is not broad enough to graduate students with advanced regent diplomas, to prepare students for college work in all major curriculum areas, or to expose students to careers, thereby limiting the students' postsecondary readiness and success.

- Strengthen youth development structures and supports so that students adopt effective academic and personal behaviors to ensure their academic and social-emotional growth. (1.4)
  - The school has a number of supports to welcome disengaged students back to academic pursuits and provides the structure that students need to normalize turbulent lives outside of school. Students are quickly incorporated into the school and immediately feel the warmth and care of the adults and particularly find safety in their advisors who reach out to them frequently to keep them coming to school and progressing academically. The school's community based organization provides additional supports such as success mentors who are matched to students. Guidance counselors visit third period classes to share expectations and information with students. Students use the school's recording studio run by the New York City WEB Center, a multimedia lab that empowers students to use multimedia to raise awareness about important social issues and perform in talent shows. The school has a family atmosphere where teachers support each other and students support each other because they all care about the social and academic success of the students resulting in some students making huge positive changes in attendance and academics. However, student attendance continues to be a challenge and students report that there are not enough clubs and fun activities to keep them involved thereby limiting the creation of an all-encompassing culture for academic and social-emotional growth.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: W.E.B. Dubois Academic High School	UD	D	P	WD			
Overall QR Score			X				
<b>Instructional Core</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, physical and health education, 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 that is informed by a research-based, common teaching framework and is aligned to curricula, engaging and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products?			X				
2.2 Align assessments to curricula, use on-going assessment and grading practices, and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom levels?			X				
<b>School Culture</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?			X				
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve them?			X				
<b>Systems for Improvement</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet students' learning needs as evidenced by meaningful student work products?			X				
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of school improvement that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are tracked for progress and are understood and supported by the entire school community?			X				
4.1 Use the observation of classroom teaching with a research-based, common teaching framework 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				
5.1 Evaluate the quality of school- level decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school, with particular attention to the CCLS?			X				
<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed