

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

The Williamsbridge School

Elementary School X089

980 Mace Avenue

Bronx

NY 10469

Principal: Ralph Martinez

Dates of review: February 11 - 12, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Elizabeth A. White

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Williamsbridge is an elementary school with 1,312 students from kindergarten through grade eight. The school population comprises 27% Black, 47% Hispanic, 16% White, and 10% Asian students. The student body includes 19% English language learners and 11% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 92.7%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school's curricula are effectively designed to embed Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) resulting in the promotion of content area mastery to support college and career readiness efforts. (1.1)
 - The school's carefully thought out curricula includes identified *Power Standards* selected as a vehicle to integrate CCLS. These standards include reading and writing for information across disciplines as well as geometry and ratio and proportions in math. For example, in math, a two-part task required students to demonstrate their fluency in converting percentages into decimals (monetary units) while the second part asked students to apply this skill to a real life scenario requiring them to consider the sales price, tax and discount of purchased items in order to determine the actual cost. Students were then asked to write an explanation of their process for arriving at the answer. Furthermore, a curricula consistency was evident throughout different classrooms on the same grade level. For example, during visits of seventh grade classes an English Language Arts unit using *Lord of the Flies* as an anchor text for study was apparent across general education and special education settings. These efforts result in coherent school curricula that reflect planning to engage all learners in rigorous content study that supports career and college readiness.
- The school's targeted use of resources and organizational decisions leads to effective alignment to instructional goals that result in improved student outcomes and supports. (1.3)
 - Academic intervention programming for English language learners and students with disabilities provides additional instructional time for these student groups. Effective scheduling of intervention time maximizes student attendance resulting in increased access to targeted support for these subgroups and improvement in skill competencies in English Language Arts and math for these underperforming subgroups. Furthermore, schedules include weekly periods for teachers to meet. Teacher team work includes student work analysis and the creation of *Individual Student Support Plans* to address students' skill deficiencies. In addition, hiring additional science certified content teachers improved the delivery of content expertise, resulting in improved conceptual understandings in science. These organizational decisions support the school's goal to improve student achievement as evident in improved science and math interim data.
- The school's assessment measures effectively identify student learning needs enabling the school to adjust instructional design and pedagogy. (2.2)
 - In all subject areas teachers use common assessments that include pre- and post- unit assessments in ELA and math as well as project-based assessments in science and social studies. Teachers and teacher teams use their assessment analyses to adjust instruction.

For example, using assessment data throughout the year to identify student's skill deficits *Individual Student Support Plans* are created to match these skill deficits with instructional strategies to be used in order to promote success in identified areas of weakness specifically ELA and math. In turn, units of study are revisited to determine areas that require more time and emphasis to sufficiently master. These on-going assessment practices result in effective adjustments to students' support services that lead to appropriate interventions that match evolving student needs.

- According to students, "Rubrics serve as a helping hand" to inform them as to what is expected and to use for both self- and peer-assessment. Teachers use a rubrics-based grading policy to aid in providing helpful feedback towards academic improvement. For example, in a science class students engaged in discussion around the merits and drawbacks of using natural resources, that is, coal verses gas. Students reviewed *Huffington Post* newspaper articles to explore topics such as global warming and fossil fuel. They recorded their findings and used them as a basis to frame an opinion on the best energy source. This was followed by the use of a Common Core aligned rubric enabling them to refine their work and receive feedback from both their teacher and peers. Thus, teachers and students are able to determine progress toward mastery of science in content and alignment with CCLS writing standards.

What the school needs to improve

- Improve instructional practice that is aligned to curricula demands to promote student mastery across classrooms, particularly in math. (1.2)
 - Across classrooms, teachers provide frequent and regular feedback to students both verbally and on work products. Teachers regularly adjust guided instructional groups in response to classroom assessments. Individual student support plans are created as needed especially for subgroups most in need. Although these practices allow the school to target instruction to support student progress and performance, not all lessons are sufficiently differentiated to engage all students. Furthermore, in some classrooms, lessons were teacher-dominated and therefore did not encourage student discussion and accountability for their learning. For example, in a special education math classroom all students were given the same task to complete. Many accomplished the task and waited for the teacher to assist others thus minimizing their participation and ultimately resulting in loss of valuable instructional engagement. Similarly, in another math class a teacher-dominated lesson with minimal time for student-to-student engagement focusing solely on fluency in numeracy skills. This resulted in a lack of opportunity for the understanding and application of mathematical concepts resulting in instruction devoid of challenge in alignment with school Common Core aligned curricula.

- Ensure that goal setting and action planning are driven by on-going comprehensive data analysis resulting in targeted efforts by the school community to accelerate student achievement. (3.1)
 - The comprehensive education plan (CEP) accurately identifies data-based goals needed to develop school improvement initiatives. Summative assessment data is shared with teachers and families at the beginning of the year. Interim assessment data for ELA and math is shared by the data specialist and assistant principals. However, assessment data is superficially connected to progress monitoring of CEP action plans and long-term goals and therefore, school leaders do not yet accurately track progress toward them. This results in a misalignment between gathered classroom level and individual student data and the assessment of school-wide student outcomes driven by goals. This has led to an inability to communicate a “big-picture” evaluation of school-wide performance to the school community thus limiting further school improvement efforts.
- Devise a formal system to regularly monitor and evaluate processes for capturing current school wide data with greater efficiency to identify school wide trends in order to enhance the coherence of policies and practices across the school. (5.1)
 - The school utilizes various web-based systems to review interim student data (Jupiter Grades), teacher team progress (EChalk) and observed teacher practices (Teacher Compass). However, ongoing school-wide data is not yet sufficiently organized to allow for a more accessible view of current aggregated trends across the school particularly for students who scored on the lowest levels on past summative assessments. This limits the school’s ability to efficiently aggregate and identify emerging school-wide trends and impedes the opportunity to make timely adjustments to curricula and teacher capacity-building based on this data to enhance school-wide processes.
 - The school utilizes outside consultants, an internal coach as well as peer mentoring to develop teacher practice. However, a transparent system to determine the effectiveness of these support initiatives to improve pedagogy is not yet fully developed. Formal teacher observation schedules and subsequent tracking of progress are emerging structures. Currently, informal pre/post observation talks between administrators and teachers refer to student data. However, there is no formal documented link between discussions and written teacher feedback on observation reports. The results in a lack of a systemic approach to gauge teacher development over time thus limiting the ability to determine the impact of pedagogical initiatives on teacher practice and provide appropriate teacher supports to foster continuous professional growth and accountability.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: The Williamsbridge School	UD	D	P	WD			
Overall QR Score		X					
Instructional Core							
<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				
School Culture							
<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				
Systems for Improvement							
<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					
Quality Review Scoring Key							
UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed