



**Department of  
Education**

*Carmen Fariña, Chancellor*

Office of School Quality  
Division of Teaching and Learning

# Quality Review Report

## 2014-2015

**Williamsburg High School for  
Architecture and Design**

**14K558**

**257 North 6<sup>th</sup> Street  
Brooklyn  
NY 11211**

**Principal: Gill Cornell**

**Date of review: January 12, 2015  
Lead Reviewer: Jo Ann Benoit**

## The School Context

WHSAD is a high school with 579 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 35% Black, 60% Hispanic, 3% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 7% English language learners and 25% special education students. Boys account for 75% of the students enrolled and girls account for 25%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 90%.

## School Quality Criteria

<b>Instructional Core</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
1.1 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson Framework for Teaching, aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products	<b>Focus</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
<b>School Culture</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations	<b>Celebration</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
<b>Systems for Improvement</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>

## Area of Celebration

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>3.4 High Expectations</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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### Findings

School leaders and staff have established a culture for learning that communicates high expectations for all and a path to college and career readiness for all students. Structures and systems provide support, feedback and advisement to teachers, students and families to meet and understand these expectations.

### Impact

The development and promotion of a culture for learning has resulted in a culture of mutual accountability for expectations, successful partnerships with families to support student progress towards those expectations and guidance and advisement supports that ensure students own educational experiences and are prepared for the next level.

### Supporting Evidence

- School leaders have set and shared expectations with teachers around curricula, pedagogy and fostering a culture for learning. Teachers develop goals with assistant principals and monitor them throughout the year. Administrators schedule a post-observation meeting with teachers after every observation, even for informal observations to give feedback.
- Staff participates in professional development on a weekly basis in inquiry-based teacher teams and in professional development sessions on Mondays and Tuesdays. The sessions on Mondays are focused on pedagogy, particularly on developing higher-order thinking questions and ways to bring coherence to curricula across grades and content areas with the school's non-negotiable components for all lessons.
- Families are provided with information about their children's progress in a variety of ways that enable them to support their children's progress. Families receive progress reports, are able to track their children's progress through Engrade and report cards. They have opportunities to meet with teachers, administrators and guidance counselors. They sit in on their children's classes. They are offered workshops with the guidance counselors on ways to read transcripts, and the college application process including the financial aid process among other topics. On a monthly basis, students and parents have the opportunity to participate in portfolio sessions. Portfolio sessions give parents a glimpse into the work their children are engaged in as well as offer them an opportunity to create the same caliber of work their children create in class. During that time, students have an opportunity to play the role of teacher and support their families with their projects.
- Students participate in CTE classes, College Now classes, paid and unpaid internships, college trips, college fairs, work study, take AP classes, and participate in extracurricular activities such as mural design, neighborhood beautification projects such as Operation Teach Learn Grow, softball, basketball, dance, among others. They have spoken about the importance of office hours set by teachers to offer out-of classroom support to students and about the school's expectations for all students to score at high levels in the Regents exams in order to be college ready. The school's four year graduation rate increased slightly from 90.2% to 90.5% from 2013 to 2014 but its percentage of students graduating CTE certified has increased from 24% in 2013 to 77% in 2014.

## Area of Focus

**Quality Indicator:**

**1.2 Pedagogy**

**Rating:**

**Proficient**

### Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are rooted in an articulated set of beliefs about how students learn best as well as consistently offer students opportunities to engage in appropriately challenging tasks and discussions.

### Impact

Tasks and teaching strategies enabled students to demonstrate higher order thinking skills and engage in high levels of student thinking and participation.

### Supporting Evidence

- Although the levels of rigor in tasks and discussions varied across classrooms, teaching practices reflected a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best rooted in three non-negotiable components embedded in all lessons. All lessons included a clear aim that required students to defend a position, activities that required students to prepare and share evidence-based claims, write and present an argument using evidence-based claims in order to reach the lesson's aim. Aims/objectives such as "Can salt water be utilized to power a light bulb?", "How can we use algebra to win a snow fight?" How do we place a brick bond pattern on an elevation? required students to present claims after doing hands on work (calculations and/or design work), demonstrate their thinking, and share their work with the class, a partner or a small group.
- Teachers offered students choice in a few of the classes visited around the work they would engage in, allowing for multiple entry points and appropriately challenging tasks for different groups of students: in Auto CAD, students were answering the aim (how can a mood inspire an architect to build a design structure?) by designing their own vase and explaining their choice for the form, color, size of the vase chosen to describe their mood; in architecture and design, three students were working on their own projects yet held accountable for the class aim (how do we place a brick bond pattern on an elevation?). In these examples, the process was differentiated for the students enabling high levels of participation and requiring students to demonstrate higher-order thinking skills in their work products.
- There were many opportunities for students to discuss their work and participate in hands on activities. Nevertheless, in half of the classrooms visited, the conversations were teacher-directed. Teachers asked engaging questions in science, math and English but they finished them as well and did not allow enough time for students to elaborate on their answers.

## Additional Findings

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.1 Curriculum</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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### Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that the curricula offered to students are rigorous, engaging and aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards, content standards and instructional shifts. These curricula and tasks are planned using student work and data.

### Impact

As a result, school leaders and faculty promote college and career readiness for all students and students are cognitively engaged.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school's three non-negotiable components offer teachers and students the opportunity to work with materials and curricula that are coherent throughout the grades and subject areas that promote college and career readiness for all. They were developed based on students' scores from the new English Language Arts (ELA) Regent's exam aligned to the Common Core. Students engage in identifying claims as well as supporting them in every classroom. Students also work consistently with informational texts from which they identify supporting text-based evidence. Regents exam scores increased in many subject areas from 2013 to 2014: in Global History, from 62% passing to 70%, for U.S. History, from 65% passing to 85% and in English, from 83% passing to 93%.
- Students are engaged in tasks and curricula that are planned and refined using their work and data. Plans reflect differentiation developed so English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities have access to curricula and are cognitively engaged: students have choice in the process by which they complete work as long as the concepts and skills are met. They participate in all school-wide projects: many of the "office redesign" finalists were ELLs. 100% of ELLs passed the English regents exam in June 2014.
- The school offers a wide range of CTE classes on architecture and fields related to architecture. Some have taken classes at City College and are taking college prep classes. Students mentioned that they take Auto CAD classes starting in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade and most have showed and talked about work they've designed in class during the student interview.

**Findings**

Across classrooms, teachers use or create assessments, rubrics and grading policies that are aligned with the school's curricula. The school uses assessments to determine student progress towards goals across grades and subject areas.

**Impact**

These assessments provide feedback to students and teachers and enable teachers to make curricular and instructional adjustments.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Teachers design midterm and final exams that incorporate all class content learned by that point. Teachers also fill out exam analysis sheets, once these exams are administered to students, to identify areas in which students did well, concept deficiencies, patterns in mistakes and ways to address those mistakes among other things. One exam analysis sheet described the following from a Global History teacher, "One area of weakness with my students was with geography-related questions that did not include maps. Being able to visualize the world and its different regions is a struggle many students have. Also, the influence that geography has on society and culture is another aspect of these kinds of questions that students really struggle with. 68% of the students who took the midterm scored poorly on these kinds of questions, which is based on my mid-term item analysis. My plan to fix this is to do more geography-related activities and have students make claims relating geography to society and culture. Once they do this, they will then be asked to cite evidence from both maps and from texts to support these claims. We have done this once since the mid-term when we discussed Japan's role before and then during the Age of Imperialism and it seemed to help students understand the influence that geography has on people and society."
- The faculty develops rubrics and assessments that assess students' understanding of the concepts not necessarily their ability to take a test. In the 11<sup>th</sup> grade, teachers redesigned the CTE exam in order to truly measure students' understanding of the concepts learned and use that information in next steps and adjustments.
- Teachers look at common assessments and determine students' progress towards goals. Six of the six students interviewed talked about having goals and using rubrics for their major work to accomplish tasks. However, the evidence gathered lacked information on how teachers regularly check for understanding and consistently share actionable feedback with students in order for individual students to meet those goals.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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### **Findings**

The vast majority of teachers are engaged in teacher-led structured professional development opportunities that strengthen teacher instructional capacity. Opportunities for staff input into instructional decisions are embedded in the school's culture.

### **Impact**

As a result of these collaborations, there is school-wide instructional coherence and increased student achievement. Moreover, teachers play an integral role in key decisions that affect student learning.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- Instructional decisions made by teachers in teacher teams to implement the school's three non negotiables (clear aim that require students to defend a position, activities that require students to prepare and share evidence-based claims, write and present an argument using evidence-based claims in order to reach the lesson's aim) in every lesson and other instructional practices have strengthened teachers' capacity as well as student achievement. This focus on literacy skills has proven to be a sensible one for the school. Of the entire study body, there was a drop from 234 students failing at least one credit-bearing class from the first semester to 180 students during the second marking period.
- Teachers meet on a regular basis with colleagues during department meetings as well as with guidance counselors in cohort teams to look at students' academic achievement and socio-emotional/behavioral progress. The counselors follow up with the students themselves and their families after these meetings to inform students of their academic standing so they can take an active stake in their success in high school.
- During teacher teams and professional development sessions, teachers look at student work using a common protocol. They also discuss instructional strategies with one another during those meetings and at mandated PD sessions. For example, in the beginning of the year, all CTE teachers facilitated the Monday PDs. This enabled teachers in the content areas to receive ideas on how to incorporate CTE principles into their content areas but also allowed CTE teachers to receive feedback from their colleagues on ways to incorporate the school's three non-negotiables in the CTE classes.