



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

The Williamsbridge School

Elementary-Middle School 089

**980 Mace Avenue
Bronx
NY 10469**

Principal: Ronald Rivera

Dates of review: March 24 - 26, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Richard Woolf

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Williamsbridge is an elementary-middle school with 1350 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 29% Black, 46% Hispanic, 15% White and 10% Asian students. The student body includes 29% English language learners and 17% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006 -2007 was 89.3%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 74% eligibility.

Over the last two years, the school has gone through an extensive construction program to the external fabric of the building. This is now completed but internally a new science laboratory and library are still awaiting construction. The school currently operates over capacity.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- A highly regarded and respected principal leads the school exceptionally well.
- A dedicated and professional team of teachers and support staff assists the principal in ensuring the students receive a valuable education.
- Staff use data in a well-organized and effective manner to inform their teaching and student learning.
- The school has very high expectations of its staff, students and parents to demonstrate continued improvement.
- The curriculum is challenging and engaging, especially in the area of the arts.
- A well-organized professional development program ensures that teachers continually improve their practice.
- The work of the school's support teams is critical in enhancing every student's educational opportunities.
- Classrooms are vibrant, safe areas that are conducive to learning.
- Students display positive attitudes to school and are very well behaved.
- Parents fully endorse every aspect of the work of the school, seeing it as a hub of the community.

What the school needs to improve

- Undertake more detailed analysis of student performance data to reveal the relative strengths and weaknesses of the school's ethnic groups.
- Set more challenging and rigorous targets, and monitor of progress to extend the performance of the higher-achieving students.
- Ensure more specific and challenging teacher targets to better challenge all students.
- Establish more rigorous procedures for monitoring, revising and evaluating the work of the school.

Part 3: Main Findings

Progress made since the last review

The school has made good progress in addressing the issues identified in the previous Quality Review report.

Overall Evaluation

This school is well developed.

A significant feature of the school's work is its ability to challenge all members of the school community to reject mediocrity, encouraging them to strive at all times to better themselves. Under strong leadership from a well-respected principal, the school is justifiably proud of its position as the hub of the local community.

Teachers use data well to inform their teaching and student outcomes are very good. This is especially the case for special education students and English language learners. However, the school does not yet the same challenging targets for its highest-achieving students or for the teachers tasked to instruct these students. The school's monitoring and review procedures based on data analysis are not rigorous enough to identify the lack of challenge for the higher- achieving students. Consequently, their progress is not as rapid as it might be. This is also the case for some ethnic groups. The school offers a very good curriculum including an exceptional arts program. This interests and enthuses the students who particularly enjoy the opportunities to widen their learning opportunities.

The principal and his staff are a very positive group and this sets the tone for the entire building. Students play their part through their hard work and good behavior. Parents at this school are forceful, direct and never afraid to address issues first hand. This endorses everyone's feeling of this school being "one family, seeking to achieve together".

Progress since the last Quality Review shows the importance the school places in challenging itself to maintain continuous improvement. Improvements in the use data for gender issues, more effective use of the Comprehensive Education Plan and opportunities for teacher and paraprofessionals to improve jointly their classroom effectiveness are all positively affecting student learning. The work of the inquiry team is of high order. The high level of data and detail the group uses ensures students receive an appropriate degree of challenge.

How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor the student's progress over time.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

The school uses a wide range of in-house and State assessment data very effectively to inform instruction and advance student learning. The school gathers data centrally using a computerized Student Administrative Manager (SAM) system. This system produces

detailed monthly reports of student progress against a number of set criteria. The staff share and interrogate data outcomes at grade level meetings to discuss progress of individuals and whole class groups. In the lower grade levels, age-specific assessments provide additional data to enhance teachers' work. The academic intervention services team generates extensive data for those students whom the school deems as being at risk, either academically, emotionally or socially.

As a result of close analysis of data and the establishment of effective systems of charting progress, sustained improvements are taking place in the achievement of special education students and English language learners. Their success manifests itself through additional report card credits and the meeting of State annual progress targets. The school fully understands the needs of its gender groups, but it does not apply the same rigor when analyzing the ethnic and cultural differences of its students for there to be a positive impact on their learning. This very competitive school compares its successes to those of both similar and peer schools. It takes every opportunity to learn from those performing at higher levels and immediate action occurs to remedy any weakness. The staff receives good training in the use of the SAM system and the teachers make very effective use of the information to inform their teaching.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each student's learning.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

The school undertakes a collaborative approach to goal setting. The process stems from the principal through the assistant principals and then to the entire staff and students. Parents play an important part through being members of the senior leadership team. The school appreciates and welcomes their comments and input. The Comprehensive Education Plan clearly states a yearly percentage increase in student outcomes for every subject. The school meets and exceeds its targets for those students moving from the lower academic levels. This is particularly the case for the special education students and English language learners. The school works particularly vigorously to identify those students in need of additional support to enhance their learning. Data shows full student involvement in after-school classes and a high number attend on Saturdays. However, the school does not set really challenging and rigorous targets for its highest-achieving students.

The school's systems for sharing whole school goals are clear and understood by staff, students and parents. Discussion about on-going changes to overall goals feature in every meeting of staff or parents. The principal communicates the high expectations of the school in every possible forum. His "rich and famous" speech to new students and parents resides in school folklore as being a positive start to their school careers. There is constant communication between parents and the school on student progress. The parents value the dialogue they have with teachers and fully support the school in raising their children's educational opportunities. Parents not only value the school as a place of learning but also see it as the hub of their community.

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.

This area of the school’s work is well developed.

The school builds upon the mandated curriculum through adapting curriculum maps and pacing calendars to meet students’ specific needs. Very good cross-curricular work occurs between social studies and English language arts through adopting common formats for writing. Whole school initiatives, for example, the development of writing skills and careful teacher planning, have resulted in improved outcomes in overall performance and individual student progress. An excellent arts program supports and enhances the academic curriculum. Arts are a key feature of the schools work and students greatly appreciate the opportunities they receive to broaden their horizons. An extensive after-school program supplements daily arts instruction and provides excellent opportunities for students to contribute to improving the school environment.

The principal holds all teachers accountable for the progress of their students. Through a robust system of regular meetings, the administration is able to track individual or whole-class progress. Discussions at grade level meetings focus entirely on using data to improve student learning. Differentiated teaching is apparent in all classrooms to meet individual student need, although the school has yet to adopt ways of challenging its highest-achieving students enough. Teachers have access to an “academic toolkit” which is an in-house comprehensive manual covering assessments and examples of good educational practice for them to use within their classes. The principal’s effective resource management means that all students receive an educational experience that is academic, culturally valuable and physically challenging.

Staff and students demonstrate mutual respect for each other on a daily basis. Students feel confident and comfortable in approaching adults to discuss academic and personal issues. The tone of the school is positive and provides an oasis for learning. In the recent past, a challenge for the school is for students to attend regularly. Following the adoption of rigorous measures, involving the entire school community over the last two years, this is no longer an area of concern.

Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school’s collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

This area of the school’s work is well developed.

A strength of the school is its ability to adapt the professional development program to meet the needs of individual teachers. Lesson observations play a key role in this process. They are both formal and informal with the administration providing immediate written or oral feedback. Staff are also able to apply for professional development programs to meet their own personal needs. The staff appreciates this approach as it acts as a catalyst for improving their instruction. The school makes very effective use of “F status” teachers to assist the learning process. This includes providing additional support in classrooms, developing curriculum plans and supporting both new and less experienced staff to improve their practice.

Teachers have numerous opportunities to meet in teams. There is a great deal of co-operative planning and exchanging of ideas to further student learning. Another positive

aspect is the program of planned intervisitation. However, the school currently does not provide meeting time for staff to meet in cross grade level teams which staff feel is an area of development to enhance further their work in providing more educational opportunities for its students. Staff turnover is very low. This is testimony to the very good leadership and management of the principal. The staff who are relatively new to the school receive an impressive array of support structures to assist them in becoming effective teachers.

The school prides itself on being able to provide students with an efficient support services structure. This includes guidance counselors, deans and a parent coordinator, all of whom have an intimate knowledge of the students. Embedded into school structures are secure behavior management systems to prevent incidents of poor discipline. Consequently, students behave well and treat each other and adults with respect. One student said, "This school is a safe, secure place where the teachers treat you like your mom". To complement this, in creating a positive tone, the school receives a great deal of support from an extensive group of outside organizations.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

Throughout the year, the school undertakes interim assessments to monitor student progress. Its program of "developing your own assessments" is proving a valuable measure in charting student progress in English language arts and math. These assessments are in the embryonic stage, but there are early indications that they are aiding teachers to improve their instruction. The staff undertake two performance review meetings during the year with the assistant principals. The purpose is to monitor and revise individual teacher targets. The principal sets rigorous targets for teachers in terms of accelerating the progress of students at Levels 1 and 2, but not enough attention is paid to the progress of higher-achieving students.

Teachers make use of the periodic assessments and diagnostic tools available to them. However, they do not use them as effectively as they do other aspects of their work to predict future outcomes in terms of raising student grades in external examinations. The principal and his team make changes to targets throughout the year on receipt of new data. The use of the SAM system is a good example. It is an effective data tool but at the same time, it is hard to interrogate. In reviewing its options, the school plans to move to the Acuity system.

The whole school participates in the planning cycle. Staff have the opportunity to reflect upon their work through grade level and faculty meetings. Collating data from these meetings and taking budgetary issues into consideration, the principal sets out goals and targets for the coming year. Discussions take place at numerous levels within the school, including parents, before publication of the school's overall goals. The principal has a very strong vision of the school's future. Parents, staff and students are aware of it and believe that under his guidance there are systems in place to ensure students continue to receive high quality education.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: The Williamsbridge School	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
Quality Score				X	

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather and generate data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor the students progress over time.

To what extent do school leaders and faculty provide . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
1.1 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of each student, classroom, grade level?				X	
1.2 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of special education students?				X	
1.3 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of English language learners?				X	
1.4 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of ethnic groups, gender groups and all other categories of interest to the school?			X		
1.5 a measurement of performance and progress based on the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grades and subject areas?				X	
1.6 a measurement of performance and progress based on comparisons with similar schools?				X	
1.7 training, management systems and structures that support teachers in the use of school data to inform planning and instruction and to track the progress of students?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 1				X	

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each students learning.

To what extent do school leaders and faculty . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
2.1 engage in collaborative processes to set rigorous, objectively measurable goals for improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals?			X		
2.2 focus on each student, classroom, grade level, academic subject and group of students whose performance or progress has been identified by the school as a particular focus area?				X	
2.3 identify and improve the performance and progress of those students in greatest need of improvement?			X		
2.4 share whole school goals with all members of the school community to rigorously improve the performance and progress of students?				X	
2.5 convey consistently high expectations to students and their parents/caregivers?				X	
2.6 regularly provide students and their parents/caregivers with information about the goals set for each student, and about each student's progress and performance, and how they can improve?				X	
2.7 invite and enable parents/caregivers to provide useful information to teachers and the school about the learning needs and capacities of their children?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2				X	

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.

To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
3.1 select core curricular approaches that facilitate and provide meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and focus on raising the achievement of students?				X	
3.2 provide a broad and engaging curriculum, including the arts, to enhance learning both within and outside the school day?				X	
3.3 hold teachers accountable for the progress and learning of the students in their charge, for making instruction interesting and compelling, and for creating a positive safe and inclusive learning environment?				X	
3.4 ensure that teachers use school, class and student data to plan for and provide differentiated instruction that meets the specific needs of all the students in their charge?				X	
3.5 make budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions strategically, based on data, to meet the school's academic goals for all students?				X	
3.6 ensure that there is an environment of mutual trust and respect between all staff and students to support personal and academic development?				X	
3.7 ensure that there are effective and consistently applied procedures to encourage and monitor student attendance and tardiness?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 3				X	

Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school’s collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.					
To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
4.1 use frequent observations of classroom teaching by the principal and other available information to develop a differentiated strategy for improving the quality of each teacher’s instruction?				X	
4.2 make professional development decisions strategically, based on data, to help meet the improvement goals of students and teachers?				X	
4.3 provide frequent opportunities for teachers to observe each other’s classroom instruction and to meet together in teams to plan, share effective practices, and evaluate one another’s instruction in an open and reflective professional environment?			X		
4.4 develop effective procedures for the induction and support of teachers who are new to the profession or the school?				X	
4.5 align youth development, guidance/advising and other student support services around stated academic and personal development goals?				X	
4.6 consistently implement clear procedures that enable the school to run smoothly and encourage effective student learning, and effectively address discipline related incidents?				X	
4.7 create effective partnerships with outside entities that support the academic and personal growth of the students?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 4					X

Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student’s progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.					
To what extent do . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?			X		
5.2 the school’s plans for improving teacher outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?			X		
5.3 teachers and faculty use periodic assessments and other diagnostic tools to measure the effectiveness of plans and interventions for individual and groups of students in key areas?			X		
5.4 teachers and faculty use the information generated by periodic assessments and other progress measures and comparisons to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals?			X		
5.5 school leaders track the outcomes of periodic assessments and other diagnostic measures and use the results to makes strategic decisions to modify practices to improve student outcomes?			X		
5.6 school leaders and staff use each plan’s interim and final outcomes to drive the next stage of goal setting and improvement planning?			X		
5.7 the principal and school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to effect change?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 5					X

◇	Outstanding
+	Well Developed
✓	Proficient
➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features
Δ	Underdeveloped