

Quality Review Report 2008-2009

Williamsburg Middle School Academy

Middle School 50

**183 South Third Street
Brooklyn
New York, 11211**

Principal: Denise Jamison

**Dates of review: February 2 - 3, 2009
Lead Reviewer: James Quail**

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Williamsburg Middle School Academy is a middle school with 699 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 14% Black, 83% Hispanic, 1% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 14% 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 2007 - 2008 was 87.9%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 85.6% eligibility.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

The principal and her administrative cabinet hold each other in high regard and work well together as one team. They provide staff members with many opportunities to grow as professionals working on targeted priorities. The school environment is warm and welcoming with parents, staff and students all speaking highly of their school. The school has utilized the recommendations from the last Quality Review, particularly the one related to connecting informal and formal observations to measure school improvements and targeted objectives. These factors enable the school to work together in revisiting its professional development plan and to set timelines and benchmarks for staff growth in meeting targeted priorities, especially those related to differentiated instruction. This priority remains a work in progress. The school does not yet do enough to support teachers in taking on leadership roles, particularly those related to sharing strategies, ideas and good practice.

Special education students and English language learners are offered multiple programs and an abundance of materials and support for their learning and progress. Parents with children in special education value their children's teachers and their effective work with the students. The staff members in these programs work hard, collaborate and plan effectively together to meet precise student needs. These same factors applied to other programs and populations will add to this effort.

The school has established a good relationship with parents and has secured their trust. However, teachers do not routinely share grade, class, and individual goals with parents to make the partnership truly effective. The school also recognizes that more needs to be done to secure parental engagement and participation in school activities, committees and workshops.

The math department continues to show student academic gains and reflects precise, timely and effective use of student data over set periods. However, this effective practice does not extend to other content areas, such as literacy. The tracking of student progress and goal setting is not consistent across the school. Monitoring does not take place on a regular basis for every student, grade and sub-group and goal setting does not consistently include benchmarks, interim checkpoints and next steps.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal encourages staff to take risks and decide on specific professional development choices based on data and classroom observations.
- The math department is effective in gathering, analyzing and utilizing data to sustain continued improvement.
- The school is a welcoming environment where students engage willingly in classroom and other activities.
- The school is successful in meeting students' various needs by offering curriculum choice and flexibility within programs, particularly for special education students and English language learners.
- Wise deployment of varied and purposeful resources supports the school's mission and improvement plan effectively by utilizing external expertise, community based organizations and other external partners.
- The administrative team demonstrates a consistent and shared determination to use data to drive its professional development in order to improve student outcomes.

What the school needs to improve

- Increase support for teachers in developing their skills and strategies to enable them to improve their use of differentiated instruction and goal setting with students.
- Set goals and measure students' academic progress in all subject areas, and ensure that monitoring takes place on a regular basis for every student, grade and sub-group and includes benchmarks, interim checkpoints and next steps.
- Ensure that grade, class and individual student goals are shared with parents and seek innovative ways to engage them more fully in school activities, committees and functions.
- Seek ways to maximize the leadership potential of all staff members in order to maximize the work of the Inquiry team and increase the consistency and impact of all contributions to school improvement.

Part 3: Main Findings

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

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do and to monitor the student's progress over time.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The administration shares timely data in literacy, math and science with all teachers in order to enable them to focus on the academic needs of students. Prior to each report card period, the school sends home a meaningful progress report informing parents of their children's precise academic strengths and areas for improvement. An informative monthly newsletter, 'The Link', is sent to all parents indicating key dates, school happenings and offerings connected to supporting student outcomes.

The school has set in place plans, programs, and systems for key sub groups. This enables students to note their precise academic needs along with a timeline to benchmark their progress. Special education students and English language learners participate in specific programs, such as Success for All, Wilson and Achieve 3,000 to meet their precise needs. Parents of special education students indicate positive regard for their children's education because of the timely and consistent support that their teachers provide.

The math department uses data effectively to sustain continuous improvement. However, the school does not use data so well to track student progress in a systematic and timely manner in other curriculum areas, including literacy, noting interim student progress during the school year. This hinders the goal-setting process and teachers' ability to assess student growth at regular intervals. It also limits teachers' ability to differentiate instruction and focus on the needs of individual students and groups.

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 proficient.

The school carefully reviewed and strategically revised its Comprehensive Educational Plan at its June retreat in order to pinpoint its five priorities and timelines for the upcoming academic year. The continuous and systematic use of informal and formal observations guided the school in noting progress in these areas of focus.

The school uses individual student profiles in helping staff identify student strengths and needs. This effort is enhanced by encouraging most students to set goals for themselves, with some receiving guidance in this process. However, the school has not yet established consistent practice in setting goals for individual students. This is partly because the school has not made this a focus for monitoring and support, but recognizes the urgency to do so.

Parents appreciate the school's efforts to keep them informed of the progress of their children through detailed progress reports, report cards, workshops, teacher telephone calls. Parents and students praised the school for rendering support and assistance to them on a consistent basis. They particularly value the easy and timely access to meet with teachers and the principal. However, the school has more to do in linking this communication process to the systematic and timely sharing of student, grade and class goals. The willingness of the staff to help them and their children has strengthened home-school relationships. However, the school provides few opportunities and additional offerings for parents to become more involved in school committees and activities.

Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students' learning goals.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The movement from a homogeneous setting to one where students have choice and voice reflects the school's positive regard for each student. Numerous students indicated that they like their school and teachers. Parents feel their children are eager to come to school since their teachers have developed positive and caring relationships with them. The school offers a variety of programs and academic choices for students in order to meet their needs and interests. It offers additional time and resources for those who are struggling, through after school programs, along with the resources from external partners. In addition, the school has a variety of programs in place to meet the needs of particular sub-groups. However, most teachers are not confident in using data to match learning activities to the different needs and achievement levels of students in the same class. This is a work in progress as the school has rightly focused professional development activities on developing teachers' expertise in this important area.

The school uses its budget prudently to purchase materials, programs, services and supports which align with the goals in the Comprehensive Educational Plan. An abundance of instructional materials and programs, particularly in the area of literacy, supports the school in its mission to meet the academic needs of its students. Teachers are given many opportunities to select and attend workshops and events that meet their needs and interests. Staff visit and view practices and programs in other schools with a view towards improving their focus on student and adult learning.

The school has a cadre of experienced and talented staff. The school provides an opportunity for teachers to support each other by taking on leadership roles, particularly those related to sharing their expertise and effective practices. The school's professional development plan provides the framework for supporting the staff in the areas of student goal setting and differentiated instruction. The June of 2008 retreat afforded the school with the opportunity to set goals and plans to meet them with designated timelines and staff responsibilities. This became the catalyst for teams to share and plan together during the school year.

Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school's goals for accelerating student learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school provides a wide range of professional development activities. Teachers are offered many opportunities for professional development through study groups, individualized support, mentoring, pairing off with a colleague, attending external workshops, conferences as well as inter and intra-visitations. New teachers are offered an individualized plan of assistance with direct support and involvement from the principal.

The school followed the recommendation from the last Quality Review to enrich and focus its informal and formal observation process. As a result, its professional development plan is correctly geared toward differentiated instruction. The school spent a great deal of time collaborating on the selection of a new reading program to meet the needs of students and staff. Staff members meet as teams and individuals with the opportunity given to them to have their voices heard about the selection of materials and programs for the school. New teachers, in particular, are offered the opportunity to meet regularly with the principal for continuous assistance and guidance and they are paired with a senior or more experienced mentor to enrich this effort.

The school has gone some way to work collaboratively and share information. The administrative team works cooperatively as it uses its data information to share student progress over time with the teachers and subject specialists. The members of the Inquiry Team remain focused on their target population as they work cooperatively and collaboratively in setting goals for these students. However, the team has kept the findings within the group, which means that other members of faculty do not yet have the same opportunity to reflect on the implications of the teams work on their own practice.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and 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.

The administration has worked collaboratively with faculty to develop key ideas, strategies, plans and timelines in meeting school priorities, based on an evaluation of past work and outcomes. As a result, the school decided to use a "push in" model of intervention, revisited its plan for independent reading, studied specific reading programs for utilization within the school and engaged staff in reflection and planning.

In addition, an Aussie consultant is working with the staff to create a math framework, additional staff now help to lower class size, community organizations provide enriched instruction and after school offerings and a planned program of observations support teacher growth and measure progress towards key school objectives. All of the above support the school in reflecting on its needs, success stories and plans to move forward during the 2008/2009 school year. This process enables the administration to check school progress over time and to engage staff in decision making.

The school measures student growth and academic progress, but not in every subject area and not on a monthly basis for every student, grade, group and sub-group. Students select a few goals, at times with teacher input, but the practice of gearing goal setting to benchmarks, timelines and next steps is not in place as a school-wide practice.

The school's vision is to guide all students and staff in developing clear, specific and measurable goals and timelines for meeting them in order to align instruction to meet student needs. The school has correctly identified the priorities for the improvement of the school as it relates to more active parent engagement, additional support for staff in the area of differentiated instruction and developing clear, timely, measurable goals for every student.

School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

School name: The Williamsburg Middle School Academy	Δ	➤	✓	+
Overall QR Score			X	
Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do, and to monitor the student’s progress over time.				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty regularly...</i>				
	Δ	➤	✓	+
1.1 collect and analyze actionable information, including assessment results and attendance data, to provide a complete view of the learning outcomes and needs of individual students and groupings of students?			X	
1.2 focus analysis on the learning outcomes and needs of all sub-groups of students?			X	
1.3 engage in an open exchange of information with students and families about students’ learning needs and outcomes, including assessment results and attendance data?			X	
1.4 design or adapt tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance, identify trends and inform instructional and organizational decisions, and to enable students and their families to assess and track each student’s progress?			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 student’s learning.				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty...</i>				
	Δ	➤	✓	+
2.1 use collaborative and data-informed process as to set measurable, actionable and differentiated learning goals in core subjects for individual students and groupings of students and develop differentiated plans and timeframes for reaching these goals?			X	
2.2 use collaborative and data-informed processes to develop the school’s Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP)?			X	
2.3 ensure that the achievement of learning goals, and the implementation of plans and timeframes for reaching these goals, is the central focus of school leaders, faculty, students and families?			X	
2.4 communicate high expectations to all students and families, and involve students in developing their learning goals and plans and in taking their next learning steps?		X		
Overall score for Quality Statement 2			X	

DEFINITIONS

“**Analyze**” or “**analysis**” includes, but is not limited to, comparisons of:

- the current and past outcomes of . . . individual students, administrative groupings and sub-groups of students and the school itself in core subjects;
- the outcomes of different classrooms and sub-groups in the same grades and core subjects; and
- the school’s Progress Report and other outcomes to those of peer/other schools

“**Assessment results**” include student outcomes on summative assessments (e.g., state ELA, math, science and social studies tests, NYSESLAT, Regents Exams, and Performance Based Assessment Tasks) and formative assessments aligned to the school’s curriculum (including Periodic, DYQ, and teacher-developed Classroom Assessments).

“**Core subjects**” are ELA, math, science, social studies/history, the arts, foreign language, and physical education/health.

“**Data-informed processes**” include analysis of Progress Report, Quality Review, Learning Environment Survey, Inquiry Team findings, assessment results and attendance data

“**Groupings of students**” include classrooms, grade levels and high school cohorts.

“**Organizational decisions or strategies**” refer to a school’s use of budget and resources, staffing, planning, scheduling, grade structure, departments and teacher teams and other aspects of the school’s structure and organization that can affect student outcomes.

“**Sub-groups of students**” include special education students, English Language Learners, the other NCLB sub-groups, boys, girls, and other groups significant to the school.

Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students’ learning goals.							
<i>To what extent do ...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
3.1 school leaders and faculty deliver challenging and engaging curricula in core subjects, including the arts, that are aligned to state standards?			X				
3.2 teachers plan and teach lessons that are differentiated to meet the needs of individual students and student groupings and are designed to enable all students to reach their learning goals?		X					
3.3 school leaders make strategic organizational decisions to support a coherent and rigorous instructional approach that enables students to reach their learning goals?			X				
3.4 school leaders maintain a culture of mutual trust and respect and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?			X				
Overall score for Quality Statement 3			X				
Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals for accelerating student learning.							
<i>To what extent do school leaders...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
4.1 use their own observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of student outcomes to implement an explicit, differentiated strategy to improve each teacher’s instruction, with a special focus on new teachers?			X				
4.2 encourage teachers to take part in Inquiry Teams and other structured professional collaborations (informed by the examination of student work, assessment outcomes and their own peer observations) and share in the instructional leadership of the school with the goal of improved student learning?			X				
4.3 provide professional development that encourages teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve student outcomes?			X				
4.4 utilize youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?			X				
Overall score for Quality Statement 4			X				
Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and evaluating each student’s progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.							
<i>To what extent do...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes and its strategies for improving each teacher’s instructional practices include measurable interim goals and suitable time frames for evaluating success and making adjustments during the year?		X					
5.2 school leaders and faculty use interim checkpoints and data to inform lessons, improve curriculum, differentiate instruction and revise student learning plans throughout the year?			X				
5.3 school leaders use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of and modify organizational decisions, structured professional collaborations and teacher improvement strategies?			X				
5.4 school leaders and the school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to support academic, personal and professional growth?			X				
Overall score for Quality Statement 5			X				
Quality Review Scoring Key							
△	Underdeveloped	➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed