

Quality Review Report 2008-2009

Booker T. Washington Middle School

Middle School 054

**103 West 107 Street
New York
NY 10025**

Principal: Dr. Elana Elster

Dates of review: November 5 – 6, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Geri Taylor-Brown

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Booker T. Washington is a middle school with 808 students from grade 6 through grade 8 grade. The school population comprises 20% Black, 25% Hispanic, 44% White, and 10% Asian students. The student body includes 8% English language learners and 12% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007-2008 was 96.2%. The school is not in receipt of Title 1 funding.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Students, staff and parents feel comfortable and welcome at the Booker T. Washington Middle School – a place they call home. This is a community where students feel proud of their accomplishments, both academic and personal. Parents know that their voices are heard as they are invited to fully participate in school improvement decision making. Teachers feel supported and encouraged.

The school has successfully begun a transformation to become a learning community. This has included a physical reorganization that placed each grade on a designated floor allowing for students and teachers from both of the school's programs, the Core Program and the Delta Program, to have common time for lunch and recess. The fruits of this labor were evident as the school buzzed with excitement as a school-wide, month-long election simulation came to a close, and the winners of this very realistic exercise were announced. The school administrative team meets weekly to maintain a sharp eye on the performance and progress of students. This practice enables immediate revisions or modifications to interventions in response to meeting student academic needs

The staff has worked diligently in developing curriculum maps for nearly every subject. The teachers followed-up this original planning with regular meetings to assure their consistency in pacing, and also to discuss, share and exchange effective instructional strategies. The principal has wisely implemented class scheduling that offers multiple variations of the same class, during the same period. This creative programming, in conjunction with a consistent pacing calendar enables the fluid transition of students between classes, allowing for appropriate student placement as students progress academically.

The school's inquiry team has begun a deeper examination of data this school year. They have developed the practice of modeling their work habits and patterns for the school teams to follow. However, thorough examination and analysis of data is not sufficiently developed. The principal expresses the need to examine, analyze and use data on additional student sub-groups. The principal states that the school's number one goal is: "Every student will make academic progress."

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal and administrative staff regularly review and analyze data to evaluate effective practices that promote positive learning outcomes for students.
- The school offers a broad curriculum providing students with varied and engaging opportunities that enhance their learning experiences.
- The principal and faculty have developed assessment systems in English language arts, math and science that enable the school to adjust the curriculum to mostly meet students' individual learning needs.
- The principal has effectively utilized the school budget providing additional resources, including the hiring of staff members, allowing the school to offer extra support to accelerate student learning.
- Teachers spur eagerness in students as learners by creating a climate that builds student self-confidence and promotes academic and social growth.
- A culture of trust and mutual respect underpins the full confidence parents have in the school staff to provide children with a high quality and rigorous educational program.

What the school needs to improve

- Further develop and extend structures that support the deeper examination of student data to gain insights into the performance of all school sub-groups and to promote differentiation of instruction to meet their academic needs.
- Continue to develop the work of the inquiry team to increase the school-wide effectiveness of their efforts.
- Establish consistency in the rigor of instruction and in the curriculum course offerings so that all students are offered opportunities for enriched activities that challenge their thinking and impact their academic growth.
- Personalize and formalize professional development plans for each teacher to facilitate the continual development of instructional strategies that directly impact student learning and improve student achievement.

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 principal has worked hard to implement meaningful and effective systems to gather, analyze and use student data in the areas of English language arts, math, and science and, to some degree, in social studies. The school uses the State assessments and interim assessments to examine student performance and progress, and to ensure proper student placement in classes. Teachers utilize information from these exams to place students in groups and to develop varied instructional strategies that meet students' learning needs and address their learning styles. This facilitates student achievement.

Teachers meet by grade level and subject area to discuss student progress. They collaboratively develop teacher-made class assessments that are aligned to State standards and suited for the school curriculum. This enables teachers to target instruction for both student groupings and individual students. Additionally, information on student progress is shared with parents through progress reports, report cards and parent conferences. Parents value the multiple ways they receive this information about their children exclaiming it as a way of strengthening the home-school partnership.

The school has made some strides in the deeper examination and analysis of student data in search for patterns and trends. The slippages in progress of students achieving levels 3 and 4 resulted in the implementation of academic intervention for all students. This emerging practice of pointed and careful data analysis is not yet fully embedded as a proactive system. The school continues to examine the performance and progress of different student groups and how this may impact and influence instruction. Although the school has examined student data on English language learners and special needs students, they have not yet fully explored the wide range of other possible student groups. This was a recommended area for improvement in the previous Quality Review. There is still no clear overview of student sub-group data or information in terms of either gender or ethnicity.

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 worked collaboratively with parents and teachers on the School Leadership Team to establish school-wide goals. Parents in particular, spoke about having “major input” in discussions about student data. A result of one of these discussions was the Parent-Teacher Association’s financial contribution towards the purchase of grammar books supplied for all students entering grade 6. This grammar book, created by school staff, was developed as teachers examined the English language arts data on incoming students from State test scores and their in-class student work. Teachers noted a trend in writing challenges and developed a supplemental writing class for grade 6 students to bolster their writing skills. While development of this course shows progress in whole grade group data analysis, continued work remains to be done to fully implement individual specific goals for all students.

Teachers attend bi-monthly grade meetings where they discuss general goals across the grade, share plans for class instruction and establish scheduling of class assessments. Teachers who are more industrious meet weekly, voluntarily, to review the progress of their students on teacher-created subject curriculum maps and pacing calendars. These have pre-set benchmarks for the regular review and analysis of student information.

Parents are well informed about their child’s academic performance, including their learning goals and academic strengths and challenges. A primary way parents receive information is through school report cards and progress reports which, combined, are issued eight times a year. The school also uses a parent-friendly software program for student progress reports that presents an easy to read, at-a-glance look at the areas where a child may need additional assistance. There is a focus on keeping parents updated on all student information which has rendered positive results. For example, the recent school purchase of an automated telephone calling system has been successfully used to improve the student attendance rate since the spring semester.

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 school offers a State aligned curriculum with a broad range of course offerings and engaging opportunities for learning. A school-wide election simulation involved every student in the building in roles as the electorate, candidates, campaign personnel and concerned citizens. This model activity took students on a hands-on learning journey, involving direct correlation to academic subjects and developed student skills in analytical thinking across the curriculum.

The principal has wisely used fiscal resources to hire staff members who provide additional support to students. To ensure full opportunity for inclusion, the school was reorganized to include a collaborative team teaching (CTT) class on every grade level. Additionally, the school designed a flexible academic intervention program where students are placed in these tutoring sessions by teachers or, under the guidance of subject teachers, they may opt to attend voluntarily. Attendance may be short-term to build a specific skill or long-term as students continue to get needed additional assistance and support throughout the semester or the entire school year.

The school offers two programs of enrollment. The Core Program and the Delta program both provide for homogeneous ability grouping, allowing teachers to offer whole class instruction that meets some of the academic needs of students. While both programs have standards-aligned curriculum, there are differences in the programmatic offerings by students, parents and teachers. There are differences in the enrichment offerings of these programs. Additionally, academic expectations are not high enough in many Core subject classes. The school's leaders are aware of the need for the consistent and wide-usage of differentiated instruction to remedy this situation. The application of differentiated instruction allows the equity of enrichment activities and promotes individualized high expectations for all students contributing to overall academic progress.

The principal has made good progress in developing one school community. The school recently reorganized from four programs to the current two programs. This reorganization rendered the placement of students and teachers from both programs on the same floor resulting in a natural socialization of students from both programs. However, more remains to be done, such as working to ensure that all students are sufficiently challenged. Two students appropriately stated, "[This is] a strong community [but] we need to bring the programs more together."

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.

All stakeholders describe the school as a warm and inviting safe haven that is an integral part of the larger community. Parents regularly volunteer in the building and students participate in community service projects after school and on weekends. There is a natural integration of shared work on the whole child by guidance counselors, student coordinators, the parent coordinator, teachers and school leaders. Students confidently expressed this full support in describing the school as a place where, "They help you build your mental and physical strength". To supplement this support, the school continues to collaborate with outside organizations that offer counseling and other personal and health related services to students and their families. There is a natural connection between the school and the surrounding community as students earn service credit through their participation in the Community Service Club. Students excitedly explained how their recycling efforts influenced change in community thinking.

The inquiry team is making good progress as its members deeply reflect on last year's work and implement immediate revisions and improvement to their current work. This year the team informed and perhaps improved teacher practice as it led the implementation of the skill of the week and guided the development of a writing grade class in grade 6. Both interventions were created as direct responses to an item analysis of student test data. The team fully utilizes the newly published Inquiry Team Guide Book in concert with team member attendance at training sessions. This has led the team to more data-based specificity in their selection of students for the current focus group. In addition, the team is carefully recording, tracking and evaluating the impact of instructional interventions on the academic success of these students.

The school schedules professional development activities on designated full days and twice a month as required, providing opportunities for faculty to share effective practices in a supported environment. The school offers mentoring for each new teacher, whether they are new to the profession or newly assigned to the school, equitably ensuring good building blocks for effective instruction and orienting teachers to their new school environment. This individualized plan is also extended to those teachers who may be experiencing serious challenges in teaching. This support and assistance is provided by the teacher mentor who gives one-to-one assistance, conducts mentoring groups and teaches model lessons to foster accelerated teacher growth through a variety of strategies. The eager teaching staff informally ask their colleagues for help, advice or visit classes to hone their instructional skills. There is not yet a formal plan or system for continued teacher growth and development. Connections between teacher skills and student achievement have not been fully explored. Nor have the linkages between school goals and teacher goals been clearly outlined.

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 weekly administrative team meetings serve as a way of monitoring school-wide student progress and performance. This group exams multiple sources of data, including State exam scores, interim and predictive assessment scores, report card grades and progress report information to ensure that instruction, school operations and school organization are enhancements to student learning. The team looks for any data anomalies, patterns and trends that may indicate a need for a change or improvement of services. Such reflection prompted the development of immediate and fluid transitions of English language learners and special needs students into least restrictive environments.

An effective practice at this school is the exit survey for students leaving grade 8. Beginning in February, the principal visits every graduating class to get written feedback on how the school served these students. Students wrote honest thoughts about the school, but also explicitly mentioned staff members and particular class lessons or assignments that facilitated their learning. The principal gives direct feedback to all staff from these documents for them to implement new strategies that will help that next grade of students.

The principal's vision includes the strategic incorporation of the above practices into the school's developing comprehensive system. This system promotes continuous cyclical monitoring and revising of plans for optimum student achievement. The plan includes the evaluation of data by members of the cabinet, the inquiry team and the Parent-Teacher Association, culminating in a School Leadership Team discussion where all stakeholders contribute to the development of the Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP). The CEP includes timelines for attaining measureable goals. The school culture is ripe for continued growth of this plan, as school leaders continually foster collaborative work amongst all constituents.

School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

School name: Booker T. Washington Middle School	△	➤	✓	+
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>	△	➤	✓	+
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>	△	➤	✓	+
2.1 use collaborative and data-informed processes 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>	Δ	➤	✓	+
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>	Δ	➤	✓	+
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>	Δ	➤	✓	+
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							
Δ	Underdeveloped	➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed