Quality Review Report

2014-2015

John Wilson Intermediate School
Intermediate School K211
1001 East 100th Street
Brooklyn
NY 11236

Principal: Carolyn James

Date of review: November 10, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Beverly A. Wilkins
The School Context

John Wilson School is a middle school with 633 students from grade six through grade eight. The school population comprises 91% Black, 7% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 4% English language learners and 22% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 94.1%.

School Quality Criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
<th>Area of:</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To what extent does the school…</td>
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<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Celebration</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
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<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Findings</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Findings</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Culture</th>
<th>Area of:</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
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<tr>
<td>To what extent does the school…</td>
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<td>3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations</td>
<td>Additional Findings</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Systems for Improvement</th>
<th>Area of:</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
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<td>To what extent does the school…</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning</td>
<td>Focus</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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</table>
Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator: 1.1 Curriculum  
Rating: Well Developed

Findings
The school has effectively and strategically integrated Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts into curricula. Planned and refined academic tasks emphasize higher order thinking skills and promote cognitively challenging tasks.

Impact
The school's educational platform provides all students with enriched learning experiences. Tailored modifications equip students for the pursuit of college and career opportunities.

Supporting Evidence
- Unit plans comprised of State standards and instructional shifts such as argumentative writing, academic vocabulary, precision and fluency reflect teachers’ understanding of quality curriculum design. Across content areas, unit maps illustrate content standards and skills, enduring understandings, conceptual applications of skills, baseline and formative assessments, final performance tasks, and extensions across grades.

- Inclusion of supplemental resources reinforces instructional objectives embedded in the Scholastic CodeX and Connected Mathematics Project 3 programs. Flocabulary, an online library of educational hip-hop songs and videos; Moby Max, differentiated adaptive software; Brainpop, an animated educational site; Carnegie Learning Series; Kahn Academy website; EngageNY lessons; and READY New York Common Core Learning Standards English language arts and math materials matched to student levels of cognition scaffold engaging and coherent curricula across all instructional programs, particularly in ASTRAL, for gifted and talented students, and in self-contained classrooms.

- Science and social studies units, in keeping with recommended scope and sequence frameworks, incorporate primary and secondary resources. For instance, New York Science, PBS Learning Media, and the use of texts developed by Pearson deepen explorations of simple and complex machines in a sixth grade science class. Teachers and students access Teaching American History and the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History websites in order to augment standards-based learning across the school.

- Written units delineate pre- and post-assessments. In addition, teachers work in teams using protocols to examine student work products and make collaborative adjustments and revisions to these plans. Highlighted adjustments made to essential questions, contributing questions, instructional supports, assessments, and engagements based on student writing and outcomes on math and literacy performance tasks demonstrate teachers’ capacity to modify curriculum to support access to content.

- Thoughtfully planned units of study include Universal Design for Learning methodologies. Learning opportunities differentiated for students in the lowest third of the school's population, English language learners, and ASTRAL students expose these groups of students to grade and developmentally appropriate cognitive challenge.
Area of Focus

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings
While prioritized professional collaborations provide a forum for teachers and teams to gather and analyze student data, strengthen pedagogy, and make key instructional decisions the intended impact on student learning is not yet realized across the school.

Impact
Established leadership structures empower teacher input and opportunities for reflection on instructional practices enabling growth in instructional capacity toward increased student achievement for all learners, yet this increase in student outcomes for all has not yet happened.

Supporting Evidence
- Teacher teams meet two or three times a week to discuss the effectiveness of implementation of Common Core Learning Standards based on examination of student work and assessment data. As observed during a teacher facilitated math department meeting, teachers investigate samples of low-, mid- and high-range work products using the Looking at Student Work protocol. Identification of students' strengths and challenges in meeting learning objectives surface common trends in their acquired knowledge.

- Apparent misconceptions of mathematical terms and the lack of fluency in the use of academic language in written responses related to ratio concepts and applied reasoning to solve problems generate a list of instructional strategies to improve upon students' ability to synthesize prior learning and apply new knowledge. During team meeting discourse, articulation of varied strategies and activities do not yet translate into consensus on deliberate actionable next steps to address findings, and thus limits instructional coherence and greater promotion of the Common Core school-wide.

- Teachers in both horizontal and vertical team meetings report they feel empowered by administrators to make key decisions that affect teaching and learning. This professional responsibility engenders adjustments to curriculum to reinforce interdisciplinary learning, the purchase of instructional resources to support shifts geared toward citywide learning expectations, and accountability for planning and leading professional learning.

- One teacher described satisfaction with teacher leadership structures, as "Collaboration is our primary work; to collectively decide what can be done differently in teaching to bridge learning and close gaps in our instruction."

- The school received a Teacher Incentive Fund Grant. Teacher leadership builds upon the capacity of pedagogues to deepen expertise in a collegial model of support with non-evaluative assistance. Two lead teachers, one peer instructional coach, one demonstration teacher, and lead teachers in each content area drive the school's efforts to de-privatize effective teaching practices. Teachers visit classrooms of their colleagues to offer specific, timely and actionable feedback about instruction, engagement, and pedagogical effectiveness.
Additional Findings

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.2 Pedagogy</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings
Differentiation of tasks reflects consistent common pedagogical practices to challenge students at various levels.

Impact
Teacher pedagogy aligned to curricula and best practices sufficiently engage diverse groups of students through a variety of learning modes. Activities and lessons spark active participation and stimulate high levels of student thinking.

Supporting Evidence
- Across classrooms and disciplines, teaching practices leverage instructional strategies as evident in tiered activities, computer-based investigations, cooperative grouping, focus questions, student-facilitated discussions, and task-specific graphic organizers. Multiple entry points and the use of varied materials aid all students’ understanding of content and concepts.

- As observed during classroom visits, student learning entails demonstrations of high-level thinking in challenging lessons. The use of academic language in evidence-based accountable discussions undergirds Socratic Seminars. All students, including English language learners and students with disabilities, are encouraged to formulate questions, express accord or discord with peers, form arguments, and use text-based evidence to support their stance guided by protocols for discussions.

- In a seventh grade English language arts class (ELA), students cited evidence from two texts, *Let Us Rage Against 'Roids* and *Confessions of a Doper* to support their analysis and inference in response to whether athletes should be allowed to take steroids under a doctor's supervision. Participation from students working in groups, positioned on inner and outer circles, or in a fish bowl arrangement elicited thinking that motivated deeper conversation, extended the thinking of others or challenged values and beliefs. Similarly, in a sixth grade special education classroom, students watched a video on unit rates then used a ratio table to demonstrate their understanding of units and unit rates. Subsequently, they performed a one-minute physical task, (jumping, counting, etc.) to find a unit rate. Thereafter, they solved a series of multi-step word problems.
Quality Indicator: 2.2 Assessment  
Rating: Proficient

Findings
Teachers use common assessment practices and analyze student-learning outcomes across classrooms. Assessments reflect ongoing checks for understanding to gauge student progress.

Impact
Teacher use of common formative and summative assessments aligned to curricula at the team and classroom level ensures effective progress monitoring.

Supporting Evidence
- Teachers use task specific rubrics, monthly assessments, and performance tasks to provide actionable feedback to students about their performance. All students interviewed reported teachers provide verbal and written feedback explaining where they are with learning and where they need to be. Evidence of rubric-based feedback included teacher comments on completed assignments stating such feedback as, “use vocabulary appropriate to content,” “brief in elaboration,” “well-chosen text evidence” and “include stronger command of convictions.”

- The school-wide progress monitoring system tracks disaggregated literacy and math data by skill. This close attention to student performance recorded on an EDM chart indicates performance on three levels: Emerging, Developing, and Mastery. Comprehension skills such as cause and effect, main idea, and author’s purpose are monitored across classrooms noting low, mid, and high proficiency levels. Emerging and developing skills are re-taught using alternate instructional strategies as well as large, small, and mixed-ability groupings at the classroom level.

- Teachers check for understanding daily. Door Pass, a quick assessment similar to a Do Now assignment, activates previously acquired knowledge through a student response to a focus question. Teachers use responses to evaluate student understanding. Review of exit tickets determine if lesson objectives are met. A growing practice of peer and self-assessment was observed during classroom visits. In an ELA classroom, students evaluated their peers’ arguments, counter claims, and closing statements using a rubric. Students gave feedback on the most compelling argument coupled with a rationale. Students also shared that they ask each other to review their work for additional support, especially in the area of writing.
Quality Indicator: 3.4 High Expectations | Rating: Proficient

Findings
Parents have a fundamental understanding of the integration and connection of the Common Core Learning Standards to college and career readiness. Teachers convey high expectations via goal-setting and detailed feedback to students.

Impact
Students articulate that the school has high expectations for their success and is preparing them for success in college, careers, and beyond by incorporating real life experiences into their learning.

Supporting Evidence
- The school consistently communicates high expectations to parents by organizing parent workshops on Common Core Learning Standards and helping them to understand assessments and grading policies. Understanding of guiding principles equips parents with how to help their children to develop further personal academic behaviors. A parent of two students, one of whom is in the ASTRAL program and the other is an English language learner, expressed satisfaction with the quality of instruction and support from the school. She stated that both students have shown academic growth. Corroboration of communicated high expectations to parents is evident in quarterly progress reporting and award ceremonies that celebrate excellence in areas of academics and attendance.

- Students express that their work has become more challenging and interesting. They write in all subjects, engage in Socratic Seminar, and attend before-school and Saturday classes to meet the expectations of the principal, teachers and their families for academic success. An example of the expectation for next level readiness is the offering of Algebra 1 and Living Environment Regents preparatory classes.

- Students receive multiple sources of feedback from teachers to inform them of their progress toward self-generated and teacher-imposed goals. Teacher written responses on exit tickets, notations in journals, remarks during conferences, and rubric-based commendations and recommendations foster ongoing communication of expectations and support for achievement.

- The guidance counselor also supports the preparation of next level readiness through academic and social-emotional counseling for mandated and at-risk students as well as students in crisis. Students explained that the "big focus" on college and career readiness during the first marking period lasts all year long. Across the school, banners with the names of colleges hang above classroom doors and The Four Pillars displayed on corridor bulletin boards remind students of the high expectations held by adults within the community.