



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

The Nathanael Greene School

Public School 36 Brooklyn

**2045 Linden Boulevard
Brooklyn
NY 11207**

Principal: Johanna Schneider

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Reviewer: David Tobin

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Public School 36K, The Nathanael Greene School, is a District 75 special education cluster school located in Brooklyn, New York. The school extends across five school sites and services 314 students from kindergarten through grade 12.

Approximately 254 students are diagnosed with severe emotional disabilities and experience cognitive and learning difficulties. The previous school placements for many of the students were unsuccessful due to their very challenging behavior. Accordingly, students are placed in a more restrictive school setting with enhanced staff/student ratios.

There are 36 students who participate in alternate assessment. An additional 24 students attend classes for the hearing impaired of whom half are placed in mainstream classes for two or more periods each day. A full inclusion program is available to 8 students within the age range 16 to 21 years.

There have been significant demographic changes in the last two years. Whereas in 2004 Black students made up 70% of the school population, today, 96% of the students are Black and 3% are Hispanic or are from other ethnic backgrounds. Male students outnumber female students in the ratio of 4 to 1. Two-thirds of the students are of middle-school age.

Students are taught within classes offering either a 12:1:1 or an 8:1:1 student: teacher: paraprofessional ratio. A psycho-educational approach is followed and teachers, paraprofessionals, clinicians and administrators work together to provide a therapeutic environment.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal provides very effective leadership and has communicated successfully her vision of the school as a therapeutic community.
- The assistant principals ensure consistency, organization and management across the schools and help build the capacity of teachers to analyze and use data.
- The school's philosophy gives equal weight to the successful management of students' behavior and to tackling their learning difficulties.
- The School Wide Information System not only helps teachers to chart the incidence and antecedents of maladaptive behaviors but also to target students' socially acceptable behaviors.
- Instruction is particularly successful when learning opportunities are practical and supported by good quality resource materials.
- The school runs smoothly and efficiently, routines are well established, and incidents of antisocial and aggressive behavior are dealt with calmly and unobtrusively.
- Regular weekly reviews of students' progress ensure that targets are reviewed and modified in the light of students' progress.
- The school communicates effectively with parents and, in many instances, has been successful in rebuilding trust and confidence.
- Teachers make growing use of formative assessments as a means of evaluating units of instruction and judging how well prompts and rubrics are used by students to support their learning.
- Data is analyzed thoroughly to examine the progress and performance of all students but particularly the most vulnerable.

What the school needs to improve

- Consider further how aspects of the curriculum (notably drama, music-making and home maintenance) may achieve greater prominence within the current programs of instruction.
- Examine the relationship of mathematics and home economics to identify the practical opportunities that they provide for students to extend their functional mathematics skills.
- Ensure that data collection methods enable the school to capture evidence of successes in relation to the school's effective behavior management practices.
- Provide opportunities for a student's voice to be heard during a case conference that reviews a student's progress and sets new goals.
- Continue to develop the teachers' capacity to match the learning opportunities available in school with students' different learning styles.
- Streamline the school's approach to action planning so that objectives are set, success criteria defined, time scales agreed and outcomes identified.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

Almost invariably, students admitted to PS 36K have been unsuccessful in their previous school experiences. For some students, the learning difficulties they encountered in their school experiences have been overlaid by behavior problems and have led to frustration, aggression and truancy. For others, however, a wide range of disabilities, (depression, autism, serious emotional disturbance, hearing impairments), continue to arrest their academic progress and social adjustment.

Mindful of these considerations the school philosophy gives equal weight to the students' learning and adjustment difficulties. Rarely do students enroll who are working at their grade level and, on average, most operate well below their age-related norms. This led the school to adopt a psycho-educational approach that addresses students' low academic functioning. Similarly, the significant emotional and social barriers to learning that students encounter requires a therapeutic approach with an emphasis on conflict resolution, anger management and negotiated learning. In working within these two paradigms, interdisciplinary collaboration, involving teachers, paraprofessionals, clinicians, and administrators has contributed much to the development of a curriculum that meets the complexity of students' needs. Four off-site units, based in general education schools, complement the work of the self-contained main site. Relationships with these schools are positive.

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 student progress over time.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

Prior to a student's admission to the school, the principal and members of the cabinet take full account of the recommendations contained within a student's proposed education plan. Intake meetings are run efficiently and all available data is used to determine how best to meet a student's needs. Generally, draft individual education plans contain a comprehensive assessment of a student's needs and include school reviews, City and State test results, medical and social work reports. Scrutiny of this data enables the school staff to draft suitable support and educational programs. Occasionally, however, such information is delayed and, in such cases, an assessment placement requires the school to enroll students before receipt of relevant reports and documentation. In a few instances, the data contained within an individual education plan fails to identify clearly the educational implications of a disability, putting the school at a disadvantage.

Data is analyzed thoroughly to examine the performance of various groups of students. The School Wide Information System enables teachers to chart the incidence and antecedents of maladaptive behaviors. Analysis of this data, discussed at teachers' meetings, is instrumental in fine-tuning support to promote the students' socially acceptable behaviors. While data analysis enables the school to capture evidence of its successes in promoting students' socially acceptable behavior; less emphasis is given to the production of data demonstrating the school's successes in reducing or eliminating those specific antisocial or maladaptive behaviors that were evident on admission.

Conscious that students' performance in State and City test results in English language arts, mathematics and science requires a context, the school carried out a detailed analysis of the 39 most recently enrolled students. Although nearly two-thirds of these students are in grades 7 and 8, their academic performance is such that they function, on average three grades below the expected performance levels for their chronological ages. Possession of this data ensures that the school is able to set new students challenging but realistic targets. The school also scrutinizes data to identify differences in test performance that may be linked with gender or ethnicity. In a similar fashion, the school "lets the data speak" in its analysis of attendance figures that averages between 82% and 85%. This reveals that some non-school attendance is attributable to legitimate and authorized absence such as students' short-term placements in psychiatric facilities and attendance at medical appointments. Although the school shares its performance and progress informally with similar schools, it also benchmarks its own performance over time to identify its successes and areas for improvement.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

Behavioral data, produced in a very professional format, is evaluated by teachers in their regular weekly meetings and shared with the school's counselor and psychologist. Patterns of behavior are monitored closely, particularly for the most vulnerable students. The graphical representation of data obtained from "level sheets" records the students' weekly progress towards negotiated targets. An effective system of incentives includes merit certificates which, together with tangible rewards, are awarded at whole-school assemblies where all students celebrate the successes of individuals. Teachers negotiate challenging targets with students. Students are encouraged to assume personal responsibility for their own withdrawal to a "reflection" base to avoid flashpoints during classes. The Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports committee meets weekly to discuss innovative strategies and monitor the impact of the school's incentive system and the needs of students.

Students' academic progress is monitored using reports that emanate from curriculum-based assessment such as READ 180, V-Math and Voyager. Although teachers are well aware of the of students' overall performance in State and City tests in English language arts, mathematics and science, not all understand how to interpret these tests results to help plan for students' learning. Teachers do, however, make use of formative assessments. They meet together on a weekly basis to share the rubrics from each unit of instruction and are given support and guidance from the literacy and mathematics coaches in their planning. However, teachers do not extend their experience of using data to match the curriculum opportunities available in school with the different learning styles of individual students. The assistant principals recognize this aspect as an area for improvement and continue in their efforts to ensure consistency in data collection across the schools and help build the capacity of teachers to analyze and use data from a range of different sources. Alternate assessment is offered in place of regular examinations and portfolios of students' work provide evidence of functional literacy and numeracy skills and knowledge and understanding of scientific concepts. High expectations are conveyed to parents/caregivers and to students. Multi-disciplinary collaboration involving observation

and assessment drives the activity of all to enhance student's cognitive/behavioral functioning.

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school is mandated to deliver the core curriculum and is successful in aligning its instruction programs to meet students' needs. This is a difficult task as the majority of students are functioning below their official grade levels when they join the school. To make the point, 20 of the 39 students who enrolled in the last twelve months arrived in school functioning at well below their official grade level. References to the mandated curriculum, contained within a student's individual educational plan, inform the planning process. Units of study, together with accompanying checklists and rubrics, are reviewed at teachers' meetings and future lessons planned in the context of students' needs. Curriculum planning plays a critical role in securing the willing cooperation of students, many of whom were not engaged in learning prior to enrollment. An outstanding science lesson for grades 7 and 8 students involved the dissection of frogs. The lesson was practical, thoroughly prepared, technical vocabulary identified in advance, health and safety issues considered and high quality resources were readily available. Students were completely absorbed in the task and curious to identify the function of organs. Mature, "on task" behavior was evident throughout. Although not all lessons achieve such high standards, the school is well placed, resources permitting, to extend this good practice by incorporating aspects of a broad curriculum (such as drama, music-making and home maintenance) into the current programs of instruction. Teachers match instruction to the needs of individual students and report on progress at weekly teacher meetings

Budgetary decisions earmark funds for teachers to attend workshops and make inter-class visitations and are based securely on the school's plans for students' academic progress. The acquisition of instruction programs such as READ 180, V-Math and Voyager together with the adoption of Columbia University Teachers' College Writing Project enables students' progress in literacy and mathematics to be tracked and challenging but realistic targets set. Teachers are still becoming familiar with these initiatives and further professional development is needed in the use of formative assessments. The school strives continually to improve its programs of instruction. Walk through sessions have examined the consistency with which data is gathered and analyzed. Such sessions need also to identify where the practical opportunities lie for students to extend their functional mathematics skills through linkages with other subjects such as home economics. Students are grouped according to their academic and behavioral needs within classes and paraprofessionals are staffed efficiently in supporting individuals or small groups of students. Almost invariably, students remain on task in lessons but are encouraged to withdraw themselves to the reflection base when anxiety and frustration threaten to trigger aggressive and antisocial behavior. Staff members are committed to promoting the school's core values and relate positively and enthusiastically with students. Students have a good rapport with teachers and are confident in identifying staff members they may turn to for advice and support. Over the last three years, attendance has ranged from 82% to 85% and this figure includes authorized absence over which the school has no control. The school is vigilant in monitoring attendance and parents are informed rapidly when a student is absent.

Quality Statement 4 - Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

A balance has been achieved between the numbers of experienced teachers and those who are relatively new to the school. Teachers are appointed not only on the basis of their prior experience and qualifications but also on their understanding of how the school functions as a therapeutic environment. Candidates for teaching posts are encouraged to visit the school, learn about its philosophy and values and the significance of teachers' collaborative work role in multidisciplinary teams. Weekly meetings enable all classroom and cluster teachers to review student performance and plan instruction together. They also share information derived from teacher's observations, examination data, and curriculum-based assessment, with other administrators, paraprofessionals and clinicians. This strong team approach promotes consistency in planning and assessment. Assistant principals meet weekly with teachers to review data relating to students' behavior and assess the impact of instruction on students' learning. The teachers leading on the introduction of V-Math and Voyager meet every two weeks and provide professional development opportunities to their colleagues.

Staff and parents express unqualified confidence in the leadership of the school. The principal has an excellent rapport with colleagues, students, and parents and is very supportive of the school leadership team. She is committed to developing lead teachers' pedagogical skills in reading and mathematics as well as their understanding of how to analyze and interpret State and City wide data. Links are maintained with the Teachers' College in developing appropriate literacy programs, particularly with regard to extending students' writing. The principal is supported by the assistant principals and coaches in carrying out annual lesson observations with each teacher and providing detailed feedback. The principal's daily classroom visits have ensured close working relationships have developed with classroom teachers, paraprofessionals and others. Cabinet meetings are conducted efficiently and data is made available to all members to consider in advance. Agendas are comprehensive and cover new admissions and discharges, mainstreaming arrangements and case reviews. In line with the school's enlightened practice of negotiating targets with individual students, further consideration may be given to inviting students themselves to participate in at least part of their own case reviews. The school runs smoothly and efficiently, routines are well established and incidents of antisocial and aggressive behavior are dealt with calmly and unobtrusively. A bid for grant aid to extend community links, written by one of the school's paraprofessionals, seeks to involve students in a Tai Chi program focusing on the dangers of substance abuse and improving self-esteem.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerated learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school is constantly seeking ways to improve the students' achievements. School assemblies celebrate the successes of both individual students and class groups. Assemblies are successful in fostering a genuine sense of pride in all students. Their eagerness and enthusiasm at these events is readily apparent. Staff members are skilled

at recognizing the small first steps that some students make and ensure that the school's incentive system is sufficiently flexible to recognize their accomplishments. Success is due in no small part to routine charting of individual students' progress, on a daily basis, against pre-determined target. Individualized education plans for students are revised regularly in the light of new information. Case study notes, for example, reveal how multi-agency crisis intervention has been successful in stabilizing erratic personal circumstances that have resulted in medication being terminated prematurely, school attendance plummeting and behavior outbursts increasing. In such circumstances, the school determines relevant and pressing priorities for a student. In other cases, records reveal that extended school support over several years not only resulted in students' improved academic skills, as measured in State and City tests, but increased parental trust and cooperation and the student's attendance.

Teaching and learning are kept under constant review by the principal and members of the cabinet. The priorities for the current Comprehensive Education Plan contain longer-term measurable objectives with clear interim goals for both school improvement and for groups of students. The need to improve students' performance on State and City tests in the core subjects is given a high priority. To that end resources have been purchased and a training program for teachers introduced. Weekly meetings provide the forum for teachers to exchange information and share sources of data (READ 180, Voyager, and NYSTART). Academic Intervention Services benchmark students' performance over time and examination data is scrutinized. Academic principals oversee these meetings and report on progress at cabinet meetings. The latter are well organized, members understand their respective roles and responsibilities and discussions invariably lead to action plans that are followed up at subsequent meetings. Teachers respond positively to new initiatives, particularly in relation to recent adaptations made to the instruction programs in literacy and numeracy.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Nathanael Greene School (PS36K)	∅	✓	+
Quality Score		X	

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 student progress over time.	∅	✓	+
1.1 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • each student, classroom, grade level, 		X	
1.2 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ethnic groups, English language learners, special education students* 		X	
1.3 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all other categories of interest to the school* 			X
1.4 Performance and progress are measured based on comparisons with similar schools, with the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grade levels, academic subject areas, ethnic groups, and other groupings of interest within the school.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 1		X	

* These criteria are partially aspirational as of now because schools do not have routine access to all of this data. The NYC DOE plans to provide schools with enhanced access to the necessary data in 2007.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.	∅	✓	+
2.1 Using data, school leaders and faculty engage in a collaborative process to set demanding, objectively measurable goals for immediate and long-range improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals.		X	
2.2 Goals and plans focus on the school as a whole and 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 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.			X
2.4 High expectations are conveyed to students and parents/caregivers. Students and their parents/caregivers are regularly invited to provide information about each student's performance and how to improve. This information is central to setting challenging goals and developing, evaluating, and revising plans.		X	
2.5 Goals and plans for improving student performance and progress drive the activity of all members of the school community: leaders, staff, students, parents, and other partners.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2		X	

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity, resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.	∅	✓	+
3.1 The school selects the curriculum based on how well it aligns with or implements the mandated curriculum and on the curriculum's capacity to generate meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and to support the school's high expectations and improvement plans.		X	
3.2 Teachers are accountable for improving instruction and student outcomes. They plan and differentiate their instruction based on the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.3 Budgeting decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.4 Staffing decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.5 Scheduling decisions about the use of teacher and student time are guided by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes.		X	
3.6 Instructional programs actively engage students.		X	
3.7 Staff know and respect students and respond to their academic needs, as well as their personal needs that affect academic performance. Each student knows and trusts an adult on the staff who is concerned about him or her.			X
3.8 Student attendance and engagement are high priorities. High rates and patterns of absences trigger immediate intervention.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 3		X	
Quality Statement 4 – Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.	∅	✓	+
4.1 Leaders, faculty, and staff are selected based on their high expectations for student performance and progress and based on their commitment and capacity to use data, compare outcomes within and across classrooms and schools and develop and revise plans and methods to improve performance and progress.		X	
4.2 Professional development decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes. Professional development is designed to help leaders, faculty, and staff use data, self- and peer-assessments, and collaboration with peers to achieve goals for improved school and student outcomes. Professional development and self- and peer-evaluation are aligned and overlap.		X	
4.3 The principal frequently observes classroom teaching and has a considered strategy for improving the quality of each teacher's instruction. Teachers frequently observe and support each other's classroom instruction with the goal of improving student outcomes.			X
4.4 Planning, evaluation of results, and revision of plans takes place in teams. Leaders and faculty inform each other of their goals and results, candidly evaluate themselves and each other, and use what is learned to drive improvement.		X	
4.5 The principal is respected and has capacity to effect change.			X
4.6 The school runs smoothly. Procedures are clear, communicated to all, and are generally followed.			X
4.7 The school aligns youth development and support services around stated academic goals. Partnerships with outside bodies are routinely used to achieve academic goals.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 4		X	
Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.	∅	✓	+
5.1 All school plans and other interventions include frequent interim goals and diagnostic assessments of progress designed to reveal in objectively measurable ways whether the plan is being effectively implemented and reaching stated goals.		X	
5.2 Comparisons of student progress within and across classrooms and schools are used in making interim diagnostic assessments and measuring the progress of plans and interventions.		X	
5.3 Information generated by periodic assessments and diagnostic measures of progress and comparisons is used to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals. Interim and final goals are modified when data objectively demonstrate that revision is required.		X	
5.4 Each plan's interim and final outcomes drive successive phases of goal setting and improvement planning, and each successive phase is characterized by agile and flexible realignment of practices and resources to improve student academic outcomes.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 5		X	