



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

The Walter Kassenbrock School

Public School 185

**8601 Ridge Boulevard
Brooklyn
NY 11209**

Principal: Kenneth Llinas

**Dates of review: December 15 - 18, 2006
Reviewers: Dee Wheatley and Tim Boyce**

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Public School 185, The Walter Kassenbrock Elementary School, is located in the Bay Ridge area of Brooklyn. It is a popular school with a rising enrolment. Currently, it has 760 boys and girls, from kindergarten through grade 5. The school does not receive Title 1 funding. The number of special education students has risen slightly in recent years but is relatively low at 4.2%.

The majority of the students (72.4%) are White, with much lower proportions of students from minority ethnic backgrounds than are found in most City and similar schools. Students from Hispanic and Asian families are the most represented groups with 10.8% and 16.2% respectively. Black students make up less than 1%. There has been an increase in the numbers of students newly arrived in the country, from Pakistan, Egypt and the Ukraine, admitted in the last three years, and a corresponding increase in the proportions of English language learners at close to 14%. Attendance is 94.7% which matches that of similar schools and is above the average for schools City-wide.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The leadership of the principal is outstanding.
- The leadership and management by key staff, in particular the assistant principal, are outstanding.
- There is a good level of consistency in teaching and learning across the classes and grades leading to good achievement.
- The personal development of the students is excellent, as demonstrated by their maturity and independence.
- Students with particular needs are tracked very effectively and receive high quality interventions.
- Very good teamwork and staff development lead to high academic and personal standards.
- Parents are fully involved in the life of the school.
- The school is very well resourced.
- Attendance is above average.

What the school needs to improve

- Further develop the use of data in tracking the progress of general education students to provide them with feedback on their progress.
- Make full use of the wide range of high quality internally generated data to set challenging targets for each cohort of students in the Comprehensive Education Plan.
- Continue to refine the differentiation strategies for average and high achieving students.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a well-developed school.

This is an effective school which has considerable strengths. The leadership and management throughout are very good as a result of the outstanding leadership of the principal and the strong staff team he has developed. Very detailed and effective use of performance data ensures there is good tracking of students' learning and progress. The teaching is good overall and some of it is excellent, resulting in good achievement. There is room for refinements in the use of data and in differentiation strategies in order to build further on current strengths. Very good conditions for learning have been established through strong teamwork, well-organized classrooms and resources and students who are confident and buoyant learners. Parents are welcomed and involved, including as 'learning leaders'. The students enjoy school and their behavior and personal development are exemplary.

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

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

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

The school has effective processes for gathering and using data. The principal is very knowledgeable about how various performance data can be used to build a picture of individual students' strengths and weaknesses. He has systematized the collection and collation of a range of key measures to establish achievement and track the progress of individuals and various groups across the school. In this way he has a very clear picture of the performance of different grade levels and ethnic groups, for example. He is very ably supported by the assistant principal in particular and the academic intervention teacher and instructional specialists.

Internal assessments and tests are skillfully triangulated with external test results to refine the understanding of where students are in their reading, writing and mathematics. They are also used to ensure the teaching is well pitched to promote further progress. Standardized tests in English language arts and mathematics are used to establish an achievement baseline for each class, and student, at the start of the school year. This information is amplified very effectively by the use of other diagnostic tests, such as the Brigance reading test, which help to gauge the students' levels and, with the aid of further item analysis, refines the diagnosis of weaknesses. The range of data is further used to provide a summary of scores for each class and identify the students at risk of underachieving. The test information is used well to organize class groupings and determine the support and intervention of at risk students.

The school carefully measures its performance year by year with similar schools and seeks to identify any clear trends in performance, taking swift action if required. These assessment processes, aligned to instruction, are leading to good overall achievement and

are applied particularly effectively to special education students and English language learners. As a result, the school's 2005 performance in City and State tests was well above average in English, language arts and mathematics, and this strong picture was sustained in 2006.

Quality Statement 2: 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 well developed.

The school sets high standards throughout. This pertains both to academic performance and personal development. The leadership is very focused on sustaining above-average achievement and is rigorous in the action it takes to maintain this. The goals set internally are both focused and challenging. For example, the school has identified weaknesses in writing and, among other good strategies to address it, has rightly targeted students operating at level 3 who could reach level 4.

Very good attention is given to the needs of students at risk of underachieving. The school's academic intervention team meets fortnightly to review all the personal intervention plans, to determine the effectiveness of the actions being taken and to consider whether further support is required. Rigorous and regular tracking of each student's progress and a working partnership with parents is highly effective in accelerating progress. The use of data in tracking the progress of general education students is not quite as systematic and is not used to provide clear information for students on how well they are doing.

There is very good communication with, and involvement of, parents in their children's learning. Parents and students are clear about the school's high expectations. Most noticeably, the school has offered a program of training for volunteer parents to become learning leaders.

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

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

The curriculum is appropriate and gives good attention to the core areas of literacy and mathematics and generates good quality data to keep it under review. A pacing calendar for the writing curriculum has been produced, broken down by grade to facilitate progression. All classrooms have been re-organised to ensure a stimulating learning environment and enable focused work in activity centers. This has led to high levels of student engagement. The curriculum is enriched by a good range of extra-curricular activities, including Saturday School, the Reading is Fundamental library program, and involvement in the District Gifted Program to meet a wide range of needs.

The school leaders are very conscious of the need to ensure consistency in expectations and practice throughout the building and have put in place effective systems and collaborative planning to ensure this. Grade teachers engage in joint planning each week and are well supported by the two master teachers/coaches. Good presentation portfolios

have been developed for every child and a recent review has identified how their use in tracking progress can be improved. However, teachers are not yet fully effective in using differentiation strategies for average and high achieving students.

Budget, scheduling and staffing decisions are closely aligned to school priorities derived from close analysis of data and focused on improving teaching and learning.

The behavior and personal development of the students are excellent. They have very good opportunities to develop responsibility and independence, including, for example, an active school council and opportunities to lead in sporting events. In addition, older students read to kindergarten children where they are trained from a very early age to take responsibility for themselves. The students feel they are 'learning a lot'. They trust their teachers and feel are well supported by them. They also feel they are being well prepared for middle school, although some would like more insight into how well they are doing. Strong systems are in place to monitor absence leading to above average attendance.

Quality Statement 4: 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 well developed.

There is good expertise and skill in the faculty. There is very effective investment in staff development, through external programs and in-house provision, although teachers do not have enough opportunities to disseminate the learning from in-service training. Considerable care is taken in appointing new staff to meet the needs of the curriculum as identified by the results of the regular tests that take place in school. The mentoring and support for new staff is very effective. Planning takes places very effectively in team meetings that place good emphasis on differentiating instruction to meet the range of student needs, although the school is aware that there is scope to further improve the learning of average and higher achievers.

The principal provides outstanding leadership and is highly respected by colleagues and students. With the assistant principal, he has established a climate of warm relationships and strong teamwork where people feel valued and able to be creative. There are effective opportunities for teachers to share and develop good practice, through team meetings, collaboration, modeled teaching and sharing of materials and plans. The school is well organized and runs in a very streamlined way.

The administration's evaluations of teaching through formal and informal observations are thorough and systematic and they provide effective feedback to teachers on strengths and recommendations. There is rigorous review of the principal's performance by the Local Instructional Supervisor who provides good support to the school.

Quality Statement 5: 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 well developed.

The school has made significant, and successful, efforts to connect its systems for monitoring the quality of instruction and the curriculum and to ensure they make a difference to the achievement of individuals and groups. A considerable variety of data is gathered and used well, for the most part, to identify performance levels and track progress, particularly of focus groups and students at risk of underachievement. The information is used very effectively to revise the already challenging goals, to inform instruction, realign the curriculum and to evaluate the impact of interventions.

The school has very high internal expectations, but these are not reflected in the overall quantitative performance targets or goals identified in the Comprehensive Education Plan, These are largely set to align with District expectations and do not reflect the systematic drive for improvement in students' progress which is a feature of the school well enough. The school's own priorities are appropriately focused on improving achievement, teaching and learning, and a useful summary has been produced to make it accessible to all.

There is strong emphasis on providing challenging and well paced teaching throughout the building, which is delivering good progress overall. The scheduling of preparation and planning meetings facilitates communication and accountability, and teamwork is strong as a result. The further improvements required are mainly about fine tuning well-established good practice, rather than making radical changes. This is a school that is reflective about its practice, knows what it is doing and whose capacity for further improvement is strong.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: The Walter Kassenbrock School (PS 185)	∅	✓	+
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