



# **The New York City Department of Education**



# **Quality Review Report**

**The Brooklyn Transition Center**

**High School 373  
185 Ellery Street  
Brooklyn  
NY 11206**

**Principal: Gail Ray**

**Dates of review: March 19 - 20, 2007**

**Reviewer: Helen Donnellan**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Public School 373, the Brooklyn Transition Center, is a special education high school for students aged from 14 to 19 years. There are two distinct programs, high school instruction and a transition center which provides students with real-life work experience. The main site is within a building shared with a general education junior high school and an inclusion site is located within a general education high school. Work site locations include hospitals, care homes, colleges and a public library. All students have an individual education plan with goals that focus on academic and social development.

The school serves 399 students of whom 10% are English language learners. Five percent of the students are White, 64% Black, 30% Hispanic and 1% are Asian. Alternate assessments are used with all the students. The students enrolled include the following disabilities - learning disabled, emotionally challenged and autism. Thirty eight students receive instruction at the inclusion site, 112 on work sites as part of the transition program and 249 at the main site. Students are taught in varying ratios of teacher to para-professional to student, each being defined within the students' individual education plan.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal is realistic about the school's need to improve, especially with regard to the use of data to demonstrate accountability.
- The work-based learning program is effective in introducing students to the workplace, where they apply and practice social skills and academic knowledge.
- Students are treated with respect and feel comfortable at the school.
- The curriculum has been extended to meet mandated requirements and incorporate work-based learning.
- Students' individual educational plans are regularly up-dated.

### What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that school plans include interim goals, how these will be measured and progress monitored.
- Ensure that data gathered on all students gives details of how they have progressed.
- Collect and analyze data to provide readily accessible information on each student's performance and progress.
- Ensure that all teachers use data to plan and deliver instruction.
- Monitor individual education plans to verify that goals are relevant to each student and reflect their needs.
- Provide teachers with specific written feedback following classroom observations.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This is an undeveloped school.**

The school's overall goal for all its' students is to enable them to enter the world of work. The transition center provides work-based learning, through which students apply and practice social skills and academic knowledge. Prior to this the focus at the main and inclusion sites is to provide students with knowledge and skills to progress into work-based learning and independence. The curriculum addresses mandated requirements as well as the needs of the work-based learning program.

The principal and administrative team has used the review process to evaluate performance and is realistic about the actions needed in order for the school to improve. One of the most significant ways is to increase the use of data and to support staff in applying the data available to them. Each student has goals defined within their individual education plan, which are updated during the year. However, there is no process to ensure that goals remain relevant to the student. Monitoring of school plans is limited due to the lack of specific interim goals and structure for this. Professional development has been provided on the use of data, but this has not yet been applied across the school.

### 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 undeveloped.**

Formal assessment records are supplemented by teacher's observations to provide information on each student. The Brigance inventory of skills is used to assess and record the progress made by every students. Some teachers record information in detail, to show what students can do and the support students need in order to accomplish tasks or demonstrate skills. However, this is inconsistent, which means the school does not have a full picture of each of its students. Some records are negative, focusing on what students cannot do, rather than their accomplishments.

Data is not presented to show how different groups of students are performing, or to compare the progress students make over periods of time. Information from formal and informal assessments is not routinely compared to show patterns or trends. The different assessment information is not presented in easily accessible formats, so teachers find it difficult to obtain an overall objective view of their students.

The school has a fuller picture of how students progress at the inclusion and work sites. For example, work site records make clear how each student is moving onto tasks with increased complexity and responsibility. Staff at inclusion sites use recording systems compatible with the host school to record students' progress in English language arts and mathematics.

The administrative team sees the value of comparing the progress made by different students over periods of time, to give insights into the effectiveness of different

interventions and programs. However, this is not yet in place. The diversity of the students, limits meaningful comparisons between groups of students.

**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 undeveloped.**

Information about students’ individual goals is under-used in planning processes. Each student has an individual education plan with specific goals to move them towards the overall goal of entering the world of work. Information from the Brigance inventory of skills is used to influence the content of these goals. As the accuracy and fullness of this data varies, goals may not match the precise needs of each student. The goals are reflected in each teacher’s long term plans for their classes; however they are not routinely used to determine the content of short term plans. School wide information system reports give clear information on patterns of poor behavior by individual students. This is increasingly used to set the goals for behavior plans, but is not fully in place.

The responsibility for defining individual education plan goals lies with each student’s teacher and with an assistant principal responsible for ensuring the relevance and consistency of individual education plans and the overall process. Sampling of plans is limited mainly to goals that appear to be unrealistic for the student concerned. This monitoring process lacks sufficient rigor to ensure that all goals and plans link to accurate data and thus address the students’ needs.

Some students attend their individual education plan meetings, so are aware of their goals, while others are reliant on teachers making them aware of what they need to improve. As this is not done consistently, not all students are aware of what they are learning and why. Staff communicate with students using written, spoken and assisted communication to match their needs.

The school welcomes parental involvement and participation in school life, but limited numbers of parents are involved in school activities. Teachers discuss students’ individual education plan goals with the parents, but some parents feel that goals lack sufficient challenge for students. The school recognizes that increased actions are needed to secure participation and involvement of all parents.

Contributions from supervisors and colleagues at work sites ensure that goals reflect skills and knowledge necessary for students at those sites.

**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 mandated curriculum in English language arts and mathematics is tailored to meet the diverse range of student needs, through adapting materials and resources to provide age-appropriate resources to support learning. This reflects respect for students, as their ages and interests are acknowledged and taken into account. Work site locations offer choice

of industries where students practice and apply academic, communication and social skills. Teachers suggest how to improve instruction, for example, the culinary arts program, which gives students on the school site opportunities to prepare for external work sites.

Data is under-used in planning and delivering instruction and to hold teachers to account. Brigance data is used alongside informal assessments as the basis for differentiating instruction, which is indicative of variable practice. Where data is accurate and applied, instruction is differentiated to meet the needs of students. There is some use of technology to deliver differentiated instruction.

Budget, staffing and scheduling are all based upon student needs. Students are taught in varying staffing ratios, as defined in their individual education plan. In some classes paraprofessionals receive clear guidance from teachers, so they can support students effectively and give them opportunities to demonstrate independence wherever possible. However, this is inconsistent as some paraprofessionals receive limited direction and limit the responsibility offered to students. Scheduling decisions at the main and inclusion sites are agreed through discussions with the other schools on those buildings. Organization at the work sites reflects the structure of the particular location. For example, students working in a hospital cafeteria recognize the need for food and supplies to be ready for busy periods and this is reflected in their shift patterns.

The suitability of work site locations for the students is evident as many seek employment at those sites and become reliable and dependable employees. Students are interested in their work and value being treated as equals with hired staff. At the school sites, classroom observations and reduced incidents of poor behavior are used to monitor student engagement in their classes. The school takes good care of students, who are confident about raising their concerns with staff.

An increase in attendance is shown in the combined attendance for the school and work sites in the current year. However, attendance data is not differentiated between locations or schools. The target of 83% is being met, but without detailed analysis to highlight patterns or trends it is difficult for the school to identify those areas where improvements need to be focused.

**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.**

When recruiting, the focus of the administrative team is on finding staff with a positive approach to working with challenging students, although, the capacity of potential staff to analyze and apply data is not addressed within the recruitment process. The school acknowledges that staff confidence and competence in using data is low, which links to a lack of emphasis being placed on data throughout the school. Whilst professional development on using the Brigance inventories has been provided, there is insufficient monitoring of the impact of professional development. This relates to staff resistance to using data and its limited use in differentiating instruction.

Assistant principals carry out classroom observations at all sites, with written feedback provided after each observation. Newly hired staff observes established colleagues and visit other schools in order to improve instruction and student outcomes. Further sharing of practice is not routine, which limits the challenge and support staff have from each other

to improve their instruction. The impact of professional development is not routinely evaluated or monitored.

Grade meetings take place each week, when short-term planning issues are discussed and strategies to overcome difficulties are agreed. Limited inter-visitations and use of data reduces the potential impact that these meetings make on student outcomes.

The principal and other school leaders are respected by the staff who recognizes them to be caring leaders. They make procedures clear to staff and ensure that incidents of poor behavior are recorded promptly. Students at all sites are clear about the procedures they need to follow for behavior and one described the reasons for these as, "We have to have rules or life would get messed up."

The job service agency works closely with the school to support students at the work sites, ensuring that each student's needs and their work tasks are matched. This, along with the collaboration with work site staff, reflects a high level of collaborative working.

**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 undeveloped.**

The use of data in setting, monitoring and reviewing goals is not established within the school's planning processes. The principal and staff articulate the school's overall goal and high expectations for students to enter the world of work, which underpins the work at all sites. These goals are stated in the Comprehensive Education Plan, but lack interim measures or sufficient specificity to allow progress to be objectively monitored and changes made.

Monitoring of progress at individual student level, is through the review of individual education plan goals, where Brigrance records and information on behavior is used to ascertain progress made. This is carried out whenever data indicates a need for goals to be amended and before the mid-year report card is completed each March. After each marking period the progress of students at work sites is evaluated and used to determine the next goals or change of placement. This applies to both behavioral and academic goals, with the data from the school wide information reports being used increasingly to monitor recent incidents and identify strategies to overcome recurrences.

Monitoring the goals of the Comprehensive Education Plan is complex, due to their generic nature and the absence of interim goals or milestones. The goals are not broken down into distinct areas or planned to show specific actions needed to be taken by staff in different grades or at different sites. Without precision in the goals, re-alignment when new information becomes available is made difficult.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: The Brooklyn Transition Center (PS 373)</b>	∅	✓	+
<b>Quality Score</b>		X	

<b>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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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"> <li>• each student, classroom, grade level,</li> </ul>	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"> <li>• ethnic groups, English language learners, special education students*</li> </ul>	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"> <li>• all other categories of interest to the school*</li> </ul>		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		
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>	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.

<b>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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>	X		

<b>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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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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		
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>		X	
<b>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.</b>		Ø	✓ +
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
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>		X	
<b>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.</b>		Ø	✓ +
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		
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>		X	