



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Public School 396

**110 Chester Street
Brooklyn
NY 11212**

Principal: Arlene Feinberg

Dates of review: April 11 - 13, 2007

Reviewer: Ronnie Solow

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

School 396 is a District 75 school, housed in three sites, that serves students with multiple disabilities in a twelve month program. The school utilizes best practices and research based curriculum in literacy and mathematics, combined with a behavior support system and functional activities of daily living. The class ratios of students to staff are 12:1:4, 12:1:1, 8:1:1 and 6:1:1, and are determined by the needs of the students as spelled out in the individual education plans in the largely ungraded school. The largest percentage of students is classified as having State alternate assessment for testing purposes. A smaller group of students takes the State general assessments, either with no accommodations, with extended time or in a special location.

There are 358 students enrolled in the school, of which 65% are male and 35% female. The ethnic composition of the school includes 65% Black, 25% Hispanic, 5% White, and 1% Asian and others. English language learners comprise 13% of the students.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal and administrative team work collaboratively and cooperatively.
- Students are treated with respect and encouraged to reach their full potential.
- The principal is respected by staff and parents.
- Budget decisions support student needs.
- Professional development is based on staff needs and level of skill.
- Students are well known to the administration and staff.
- The instructional program is based on research-driven, best practices for disabled students.
- The building is well maintained.

What the school needs to improve

- Expand professional development in the collection and use of data to inform classroom practices.
- Refine staff knowledge regarding the creation of student portfolios.
- Create a staff handbook to institutionalize rules and regulations across sites.
- Increase parent and caregiver involvement in the school life of their students.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

The team approach to educating students is evident across the three sites of the school. The principal, assistant principals, teachers, paraprofessionals, school aides and related service providers collaborate to assist each student to reach their individual potential. The school serves students diagnosed with autism and emotional and developmental disabilities, many of whom also have physical and sensory disabilities.

Related services are provided in the areas of vision, hearing, occupational therapy, physical therapy, counseling, speech and language therapy, and medical assistance by on-site nurses. Physical and assistive technology supports are also provided, even when not mandated by the individual education plan.

The principal and her cabinet have an accurate view of the school strengths and areas for improvement.

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.

The principal and staff use a variety of assessments to determine the educational needs of the students. At the main site, coupled with the individual education plan, Brigance inventories provide the classroom staff with an accurate picture of student strengths and needs. In classes where students are mandated to take the State exams, State data and Princeton Review assessment results are used, along with the individual education plan information. Additionally, Treatment and Education of Autistic and other Communication Handicapped Children structures and the Power of Choice behavior modification program data are employed to generate appropriate individual education plan objectives.

The school examines data for the different cohorts of students according to class size ratios. English language learners are served in self-contained classes or with individual paraprofessionals when an insufficient number of students speak the language to warrant a separate class. An English as a second language teacher serves the three sites in both a push-in and pull-out program model. Data for verbal and non-verbal students is examined, as well as looking at the Power of Choice data to determine activities for male and female students. Each individual education plan prescribes the specific procedures and accommodations for the student.

Classes are largely non-graded but grouped according to the chronological age of the students. Data regarding attendance, toileting, movement to less restrictive environment or services, behavioral plan expectations and decertification is also reviewed. Students taking State exams are grouped for mathematics and literacy instruction based on capacity and need rather than by classroom designation. These students take State standardized

examinations with the appropriate modifications that are outlined on their individual education plans. The unique educational needs of each student, and the determined handicapping condition, are the primary focus rather than comparisons by sub-group.

Principals of District 75 schools with similar populations meet regularly to discuss pertinent issues. No comparisons between schools are made given the need to highly individualize the program for every student at the school. The New York State alternate assessment data folios, used to assess student ability on State standards in mathematics, literacy, science and social studies, indicate progress for the largest number of students in the targeted age groups.

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.

The individual education plan and classroom assessments determine the goals and objectives for each student. The assistant principals meet with each teacher every week to examine classroom data in accordance with the Comprehensive Education Plan, the Brigance inventories, the individual education plan, formal and informal assessment data. Twice weekly, the administrative team reviews the information and uses it to make informed decisions. Each individual education plan prescribes the specific procedures and accommodations for the student. Differentiated instruction, materials that address all learning channels and developing positive attitudes about self, academic endeavors, behavior and emotional growth and development are aspects of the goal setting procedures.

Teachers and other classroom staff, such as paraprofessionals and related service providers are encouraged to assist one another and confer about particular student needs. The pupil personnel team meets weekly to discuss students who are most in need of additional assistance. All students at the satellite sites have behavior management plans that are closely monitored by the assigned assistant principal and crisis team personnel. At the satellite sites, academic intervention services are also provided to the neediest students. High expectations are communicated to parents and students through regular communication and meetings.

Communication with parents and other caregivers takes place via the communication notebook, telephone, behavior plan, report card meetings, individual education plan conferences, workshops and family events. Currently, there is no parent coordinator at the school to plan additional activities and to provide outreach. The parent teacher association and school leadership team are active bodies involved with the school. The administration is continuing to develop ways to increase family involvement in the school through workshops and other opportunities designed to teach parents how to better work with their child at home.

Students are assessed for their individual growth and development. Staff uses the picture exchange communication system and assistive technology devices to increase the communication levels and functional capacity of the non-verbal students. Individual paraprofessionals who work with profoundly disabled students explained that, “You learn to distinguish the meaning of different sounds from their crying, gaze or body language. After a short period of time, it becomes apparent as to what the student needs or wants.”

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.

Students participating in the standardized assessment program receive their instruction with the approved City curriculum using Everyday Mathematics for mathematics and the Comprehensive Approach to Balanced Literacy, including the workshop model. The Brigance assessments used for alternate assessment students supports the classroom curriculum using the Treatment and Education of Autistic and other Communication Handicapped Children structures and the use of picture exchange communication system or other augmentative technology. Incorporated into each class program are functional life skills and activities of daily living, so that students can become more independent individuals. This program is tailored to the needs of the student.

The students with the greatest need in the standardized testing program receive academic intervention services in order to enhance and support their academic progress. In each classroom, leveled libraries appropriate for age and interest are evident, along with manipulative materials, individual and class schedules and computers. All student work is differentiated for need and student ability. Student work is posted throughout the classrooms and hallways. Students are engaged in learning tasks supported by teachers, paraprofessionals and related service providers.

Budget, staffing and scheduling decisions support student needs. Each site is supervised by an assistant principal. There are six nurses at the main site and one each at the other sites. Additional student support services are provided by the crisis intervention specialist, related service providers and classroom, management, health or bus paraprofessionals.

Routines and regulations are high priorities for students with challenging behaviors. Classrooms are designed to assist teachers and contain high-interest, low-vocabulary materials that are age appropriate, as well as having assistive technology and other work stations modeled on best practices curriculum. Students stated they trust and rely on their individual paraprofessional, teacher, guidance staff member or related service providers.

Attendance is a high priority. The attendance committee meets weekly to review the school data. Absence triggers an immediate response. Busing issues have a negative impact on student attendance when routes are changed or the bus does not arrive to pick up a student. Medical fragility also plays a role in school attendance figures.

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.

The principal hires new staff based on willingness and interest in working with the autistic or emotionally challenged students. The New York City Teaching Fellows Program is currently providing the newest members of the teaching staff.

Professional development activities are determined through a staff survey. This year, two academic coaches were added to the staff as a result of the survey responses. Coaches, assistant principals and the principal help support the requests of the staff. Inter-visitations

and formal classroom observations serve as opportunities for professional growth and development. Written reports by the principal and assistant principals and the pre- and post- observation conferences provide positive feedback and suggestions for growth and development.

Student portfolios contain the individual education plan, Brigance inventory data or the Princeton Review assessment data. The principal recognizes the need to further develop the use of data to improve the educational outcomes for each student. Additional staff training activities are being developed.

Staff members at each of the sites have a common planning time. The assistant principals and teachers meet twice a week to plan, share materials and discuss issues of mutual concern for their grade or cohort. Once a month, the staff at each site meets for a faculty conference to discuss data, progress and other issues of concern for the entire staff.

Currently, there are two after-school recreation programs provided by outside agency partners. Many agencies assist parents with respite care, camp, and assistance with navigating the social security or medical care systems. Family fun days, parent workshops and other activities are held to involve family members in the school life of their students.

The principal is respected by staff and parents. She was described as supportive, encouraging and knowledgeable. She has developed a parent handbook and is currently finalizing a staff handbook in order to institutionalize the rules, regulations and routines across the sites. The school runs smoothly as the program design is known and followed by students and staff. Her ability to lead contributes to the orderly environment and effective operation of the school.

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 principal and assistant principals meet with individual teachers and teams on a regular basis to review individual education plans, classroom work and data, behavior management plans, attendance and related services information. Revisions are made immediately when they are required. Teacher-made assessments, Princeton Review interim data, Brigance data and academic intervention services information assist teachers in making immediate modifications to the academic program for each student.

The principal meets with the cabinet twice a week to review progress and needs. The school leadership team and parent association members meet with the principal monthly. The school goals and objectives, as outlined in the Comprehensive Education Plan, are reviewed regularly for progress or lack thereof. Data serves as the benchmark for each student, cohort and site, and is used to strategize for each site. The school goals and objectives, in the Comprehensive Education Plan, are developed and reviewed by the school leadership team composed of administrators, teachers, paraprofessionals, related service staff and parents. The team represents the whole school community. Modifications and revisions are made when determined to be necessary and disseminated to the staff.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

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| SCHOOL NAME: Public School 396 | ∅ | ✓ | + |
| Quality Score | | X | |

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| 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.

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| 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 | |

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| 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. | | | |
| 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 | |