



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



# **Quality Review Report**

**East Brooklyn Congregations High School for  
Public Service-Bushwick**

**High School 545  
1155 Dekalb Avenue  
Brooklyn  
NY 11221**

**Principal: Victor Capellan**

**Dates of review: May 31 – June 1, 2007**

**Reviewer: Frank Jones**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The school has a population of 615 students in grade 9 through 12. Eighty percent of the students are Hispanic, 11% are Black with the remainder being Asian, White or of other ethnic background. There are a growing number of English language learners, currently about 10% of the population, and they receive additional support according to their needs. Similarly there are 60 (9.8%) special education students.

The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with the eligibility level being higher than similar or other City schools. Attendance figures at the school have declined over the last 5 years to the current level of 78% and are significantly below those of similar or City schools.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal is highly respected by teachers, parents and students and has demonstrated the capacity to manage and sustain change.
- The principal provides strong direction for the school and his leadership is underpinned by very good interpersonal skills.
- Staff demonstrate a high level of care, expectation and commitment for all students.
- Students enjoy coming to school and feel confident to discuss academic and personal issues in a caring, familial context.
- The analysis of data by administrators is well developed.
- The school uses data effectively to set short term learning goals for students.
- Instruction is very focused on addressing student need.
- Students are eager, enthusiastic, well motivated and actively engage with their learning.
- Relationships at all levels are extremely good and reflect the supportive climate of the school.

### What the school needs to improve

- Implement more robust strategies to raise attendance levels.
- Set long term realistic, quantifiable departmental goals based on students' prior performance.
- Ensure all teachers have the ability to analyze and utilize data confidently, effectively and consistently across the school.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This is a proficient school.**

In the three years that the principal has been at the school he has worked hard to develop a collegial atmosphere where every person is valued and their contribution welcomed. As a result, relationships at all levels are extremely good and reflect a supportive climate. Students, staff and parents all used the phrase, 'we are one big family,' and display an obvious pride in the school. Systems and processes to enable the smooth running of the school are in place and serve to facilitate a good learning environment. Administrators are extremely adept in data analysis and this impacts positively on student progress. Some departments are less confident, however, and this leads to inconsistencies across the school. Nevertheless, the close attention given to student performance and progress is a strong theme that runs through the school. Instruction is well targeted and, as a result, students are interested and engaged in a curriculum that is appropriate for them.

The principal is highly respected both within and by the wider school community. He has quietly but effectively managed change. There has been a significant rise in student graduation during his time at the school. The school instills in its students that to graduate is not enough, but to pass and be ready to access further learning is what is required. The administration is well supported by a staff that demonstrates a high degree of care and understanding for the whole person. Students understand this and in turn show respect for and appreciation of their teachers.

#### **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 well developed.**

The analysis by the administrators of student data is well developed. The report cards, diagnostic tests, interviews with parents and students all contribute to the holistic picture that the school collects to establish a clear profile of each student's strengths and weaknesses prior to their entering the school. Over 60% of new entrants attend a summer initiation program which provides an additional opportunity for staff to assess each student and enables the school to match programs to need. Data from the Regents examinations, Princeton Review and the three marking periods is carefully analyzed to identify what students know and the progress they have made as they move through the school. Programs for each student are revised in the light of this information to clearly identify the journey towards graduation.

Weekly advisory sessions are used to discuss with students their individual credit check worksheet. This clearly indicates what has been done and what needs to be done in each subject if they are to meet with success. Student portfolios and on going assessment by teachers enables them to carefully monitor progress and achievement.

The school is particularly skilled at disaggregating data to identify the needs of all groups of students, including the two main ethnic groups, who are subsequently carefully tracked

to measure progress. Individual education plans are in place for special education students and their progress is monitored on a regular basis to ensure they are following appropriate programs. English language learners are similarly monitored to ensure they are in the appropriate class for their English skill level. Other high performing general education students are identified and have the opportunity to attend honors classes and gain advanced Regents diplomas.

The principal systematically uses data to compare subjects and classes within those subjects. He has identified which departments are performing well and realigns the curriculum or instruction to provide appropriate academic services for students. The skills of teachers in analyzing data are variable across the school and leads to a level of inconsistency. Close relations with neighboring schools allow the principal to make comparisons and share best practice. Trends in performance data are also carefully noted.

**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.**

Annually, the principal and his cabinet discuss the extensive data available and establish the goals and plans for the next Comprehensive Education Plan. Long-term departmental goals to raise the pass rate by an agreed number of percentage points are formulated in discussion with department heads but such conversations are not firmly based on student prior performance. Data is used more effectively to set short term learning goals for individual students. In the best practice, departments carry out an analysis to identify skills deficits. Instruction is then realigned to address gaps in knowledge. This practice is not uniform across the school, however. In mathematics there is good use of data and as a result students progress well.

All students attend an advisory group, which enables detailed discussion of performance to take place and short-term realistic goals to be addressed. Students are aware of what they need to do to succeed and close monitoring enables progress against the plans to be measured. Good use is made of this information to target enrichment opportunities or provide intervention. This process is particularly well established to support special education students. In science, for example, careful consideration is given to students’ language ability and understanding of scientific terminology when planning appropriate programs for them. The additional support for English language learners has resulted in an increasing number passing the English Language Arts Regents examination.

Parents, students and the community are well aware of and positively support the school’s high expectations. Parents receive regular, clear and detailed information about their children’s progress and value the opportunities to discuss the implications with teachers. The school constantly reinforces its philosophy that graduating is more than academic achievement. It is a readiness to embrace the next steps in personal and social development and preparation is essential in order to achieve this.

**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 well developed.**

The school follows the mandated curriculum and uses the scope and sequence from the region to add continuity and coherence to learning. Teachers often use a thematic approach to deliver differentiated programs. The delivery of the curriculum is further supported by the use of frameworks such as Ramp Up or Prentice Hall. The Princeton Review provides a baseline for each student and the majority of teachers differentiate instruction well, often through astute and targeted questioning, to address the variety of learning styles. Good analysis and use of data results in teaching being very focused on meeting student need. This takes place in a variety of forms including class, group and individual study. The consequence of this is eager, enthusiastic and well-motivated students who actively engage with their learning. Where practice is less secure the issues are addressed with relevant staff to improve outcomes. A wide range of extra curricular activities enriches and enhances the core curriculum.

The principal is highly competent when disbursing the budget. Spending decisions to provide additional support and materials for vulnerable groups, such as English language learners, are taken after a cost analysis of the impact of expenditure on standards has been carried out. The school has hired additional teachers to reduce class size with positive effects on student outcomes. Good relationships exist with the Cooperative College and where it becomes apparent that students would benefit from more vocational courses, arrangements are made for them to access these on a part-time basis.

A good feature of the school is the weekly advisory group meetings where students are linked to one member of staff. In this way staff are able to demonstrate a high level of care, expectation and commitment for all students, who in turn feel confident to discuss academic and personal issues in a caring, familial context. There is a dichotomy between the enjoyment students’ express at being in school and the attendance levels they achieve, which is below that of similar and other City schools. High rates of absence trigger phone calls to parents but the strategies employed to date are not having sufficient impact in raising attendance. The school has recognized the need to develop more robust strategies to raise attendance levels but has yet to implement them successfully.

**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 and one assistant principal joined the school three years ago during which time they have earned the respect of the school community and demonstrated the capacity to initiate and manage change. The staff has a range of experience and this provides a well-balanced approach to instruction and the curriculum. Their ability to handle and utilize data varies however. In mathematics where it has been embraced and understood, the impact on student progress is evident.

Professional development takes place on a weekly basis and is determined by a needs analysis of the teachers and the school. For example, development is provided in order to raise the confidence and capacity of teachers’ ability to use data. Routine lesson observations carried out by administrators ensures that they know the abilities of staff well

and can target support, such as the introduction of the New York City Writing Project to further enhance instruction. Coaches similarly play a valuable role in demonstrating good practice and assisting teachers. Staff welcome the opportunity to share practice, plan together and learn from each other's expertise, during instructional team meetings, for example. Joint strategies to address the needs of students giving cause for concern are often outcomes of these meetings. Access to the guidance team ensures a full range of expertise is involved in devising and implementing an approach to improve student outcomes.

This happy and well-ordered school runs smoothly on a daily basis, benefiting from the well-established systems and procedures that are in place. The principal has worked hard to develop productive partnerships with community-based organizations. Every student has the opportunity and is expected to work for 60 hours per year in the community. They have gained confidence and maturity during this process and have formed socially aware pressure groups influencing community decisions.

**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.**

Working closely with his cabinet, the principal provides strong direction and leadership. The cabinet meets with the senior leadership team on an annual basis to evaluate and reflect on progress made over the year. They are then able to establish goals for the coming year that are subsequently monitored and, where necessary, refined as the year progresses. Many of the goals are quantifiable but the figure allocated to them is often aspirational rather than based on prior performance. The 3% per year goal to raise mathematical achievement has been met over a three-year period but this is not the case in all subjects. In other subjects there is a mismatch between performance achieved and goals set. The school does not set quantifiable goals with identified incremental steps that will enable progress to be measured periodically.

The detailed data the administration holds on departments, groups and individual students provides them with a range of information that they analyze and utilize well. Comparative data across and within departments indicates their relative performance. Where this is not at a satisfactory level, intervention occurs. In science the test results from the laboratory were unacceptable and the principal has, as a result, altered the method of instruction and personnel involved to provide continuity for students. Marking periods identify student progress and the effectiveness of the program they are following in terms of impact on achievement. Following the first marking period the student program is realigned if they are not making the progress anticipated. The close attention to student need has enabled the improvement trend to be maintained.

Plans at all levels across the school are assessed and evaluated at appropriate times. Instruction is realigned and reinforced as a result of this information. From 9th grade students are placed in classes based on performance to enable focused instruction. The school has recently added three new advanced placement classes in physics, calculus and United States history to ensure the needs of higher performing students are met.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: East Brooklyn Congregations High School for Public Service-Bushwick (HS 545)	∅	✓	+
<b>Quality Score</b>		<b>X</b>	
<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>			<b>X</b>
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>			<b>X</b>
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>		<b>X</b>	
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.		<b>X</b>	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>			<b>X</b>

\* 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.		<b>X</b>	
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.		<b>X</b>	
2.3 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.		<b>X</b>	
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.			<b>X</b>
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.		<b>X</b>	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>		<b>X</b>	

<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>	∅	✓	+
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>	∅	✓	+
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>	∅	✓	+
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	