



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

The Thomas Brown School

Public School 044

**80 Maple Parkway
Staten Island
NY 10303**

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Thomas Brown School is an elementary school that provides education for 865 pre-kindergarten through grade 6 students. Of these, 53% are Black, 36% Hispanic, 7% White and 4% are Asian and American Indian. English language learners comprise 7% of the school population, which is below that found in schools of the same type. At more than 20%, there are more special education students than typically found in similar and City schools. It is a Title 1 school with attendance lower than similar and City schools.

The school has been affected in recent years by a number of factors including new community housing, an increase in the proportion of special education students, the incorporation of an annex for upper grades into the building, and significant staff changes, including a lack of continuity among assistant principals.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Considerable efforts are made to encourage parental involvement and engagement with the school and with their children's progress.
- Frequent assessments ensure that staff, students and parents are aware of student progress in both behavior and academic achievement.
- There is frequent and open communication about the school's vision and goals, and about the needs, achievements and progress of students.
- A range of data is used to inform organization and instruction, from external test results to daily reports.
- The school has a successful program for integrating groups and individuals that are new to the school community.
- There is a good rapport between staff and students, which is modeled by the administration.
- The administration is aware of and provides sufficient opportunities for the professional development needed to encourage appropriate changes in the school.
- Technology is used in a variety of ways, including managing data and facilitating differentiated instruction.
- Classroom displays show a good balance between instructional information and student work.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure all staff use data to differentiate instruction based on the needs of individual students.
- Encourage all parents to engage with the school's culture and vision, and with their children's progress.
- Raise the expectations of all staff, parents and students to ensure they have high and realistic expectations of achievement.
- Ensure all members of the school community understand and accept the need for personal responsibility and accountability.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school with a few well developed features.

The principal is successfully developing a family atmosphere in the school, where students are learning to respect each other and get along together as a result of the school's strong lead on improving behavior. The school's new behavior program is clearly working. Students like the routines and new changes, and want to be in school. Instruction is moving from a more traditional approach to one of performance-based delivery. The principal is supported in this drive for improvement by the assistant principals, the majority of the staff, and a core of parents and external agencies.

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 school collects a wide range of objective external and internal data on a regular basis. Information that reflects student behavior provides an additional perspective. These data streams are used to gain a secure knowledge and understanding of each student's performance and progress, and to inform classroom practice.

Adults in the school community are constantly made aware of all relevant assessment information because the principal shares this with them. As a result, staff know how the school compares with similar ones, and how their individual students, classes and grades are progressing compared with students' previous learning and each other.

The overall picture is well monitored. For instance, the school is well aware of the impact of its one-year focus on only one group, its high level 2 students, and the fact that level 3 students did not achieve level 4 and that special education students did not progress adequately. Subsequent areas for improvement focus on establishing systems to identify more quickly special education students and their intervention needs.

Data has informed the restructuring of the lower grades, which has resulted in higher achievement. There school does not specifically analyze by ethnic and gender groups because those with a specific need are identified elsewhere. However, a substantial group of children new to the school and the country, has been provided with a comprehensive regimen of English language learner support including pull-out bilingual lessons and being paired with English speakers in lessons. This combination of support mechanisms has improved their achievement.

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.

Data, representing both behavior and academic achievement, is used to set measurable goals and inform learning plans for individuals, classes and groups of students. The administration, along with the instructional, leadership and pupil-personal teams meet regularly to collaboratively consider the school’s operation, particularly programs for students in greatest need of improvement. This is continued in faculty conferences and grade meetings, and during focused walk-throughs that examine specific areas of teaching and learning.

As a result of setting goals and using data to evaluate the impact of programs on students’ progress, staff are alerted to the specific skills that are issues for groups of students. Following such an evaluation and review of reading and writing, the school has implemented a program to improve students’ knowledge, understanding and improved use of phonics in decoding and spelling words that are new to them. Computers are being routinely used to record data and so facilitate its analysis and presentation. Staff members who are more proficient with computer-based data are supporting others with less confidence.

Parents’ awareness of data about their children has increased attendance at workshops and enabled home involvement in learning. Many staff members and some parents are becoming aware of the positive effects of conveying high expectations. Student progress and achievement has improved in some classes and grades as a result of sharing goals and information about progress and developing much stronger partnerships with some parents. The challenge is now to reach out and engage all parents to share the school’s vision and culture, and share the responsibility for their children’s achievement.

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 is in place but as a result of analyzing progress data, new standards-led programs have been introduced in English language arts and mathematics. Teachers have already found these helpful when planning their instruction. In each grade there is at least one teacher who has attended collaborative meetings and is able to model needs-led differentiated instruction within the school plan.

The majority of teachers are aware of their accountability and responsibility to use data to differentiate their instruction to improve student outcomes. Most teachers’ planning of instruction puts focus on how students will learn. This has increased engagement in lessons and enabled teachers to organize learners into groups aligned to their ability. The majority of teachers use data to identify the small steps students need to learn next and to identify groups for conferencing and guided reading to enable this to happen. In addition, computers are more commonly being used to facilitate specific aspects of learning and make learning more interesting to students. This move away from traditional techniques is

perceived positively and implemented by most, but not all, members of staff. Consequently, some lessons are still not as well differentiated as others.

Staffing decisions are made efficiently and staff are assigned in order to capitalize on their strengths and to respond most effectively to the needs of the students. An example of this is the organization of bi-lingual lessons for students new to the country. Decisions about the budget are based on a clear evaluation of need, for example ensuring resources are available for delivering the new curriculum effectively. Schedules are adjusted to make sure students have the time they need to learn basic skills and engage in a full range of subjects.

The school puts equal emphasis on students' personal development. The whole school behavior program, when students are taught how to resolve potential and actual conflicts, is an excellent example of the concerted attempt to develop students' ability to make the most of the instruction and other opportunities made available to them. Staff know students' personal and academic needs well.

Punctuality is not given high priority by some parents, though it is clearly encouraged by the school. Absence is immediately dealt with. Students want to be at school, enjoy the order and new daily routines, and are increasingly becoming more engaged with learning. Students talk comfortably with adults in the school, enhanced by an initiative that has the non-teaching staff 'adopting a child'.

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 with some well developed features.

The principal has a diligent, thorough, relentless and flexible approach to raising student achievement. She effectively leverages both greater community involvement in the school and improved instruction to achieve these goals.

Substantial staff turnover has recently provided the opportunity to appoint staff who are comfortable with, and wish to become competent in, the use of data to differentiate and improve instruction. Professional development opportunities are based on assessment of teacher needs, are provided frequently, and have successfully enhanced teaching. The principal regularly carries out formal observations of classroom teaching, and visits classrooms informally on a daily basis. Inter-visitation has increased as a routine for collaborative evaluation, planning and sharing successful teaching methods. However, professional development is not yet fully incorporated into an ongoing and continuous plan.

The school's team structure enables all staff to get together regularly to talk about their roles in accelerating student progress and bringing about school improvement. Weekly grade meetings enable staff to hold conversations about student progress and to plan subsequent instruction.

The principal is respected by all members of the school community for her capacity to face the inherent range of challenges in a professional, caring and steadfast manner. Appropriate procedures are in place to facilitate the smooth running of the school. Parents and other community partners have become more a part of the school 'family' as a result of frequent school events and play an increasing role in helping the school reach its goals.

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 cabinet meets weekly to assess the school's progress in meeting its goals. Data from formal assessments, which occur monthly or more frequently, as well as other relevant information, is collected, often analyzed using computers, and is used to continually evaluate and adapt plans. Responsive communication and collaborative consultation occur through instructional team meetings, pupil progress team meetings, grade conferences and professional development sessions. Staff are held accountable for supporting the school's goals in a range of ways, including observations, walk-throughs and looking together at student work.

Constant attention is paid to getting the basics right, such as attendance, routines and relationships, so that students are increasingly becoming more able to accelerate their learning, which is enhanced by the improving differentiated instruction. Each cycle of evaluation leads to the next year's goals.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: The Thomas Brown School (PS 044)	∅	✓	+
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.	Ø	✓	+
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.	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	
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.	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	
Overall score for Quality Statement 5		X	