



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

The Damrosch Day Treatment Center

Public School 186

750 Jennings Street

Bronx

NY 10459

Principal: Ann Strauss

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Reviewer: Louise Kapner

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Information about the school

The Walter Damrosch Day Treatment Center, Public School 186, a multi-sited school located in the Bronx and Manhattan, serves a special education population of 395 students from grades kindergarten through 12, ages 4.9 through 18. This is a twelve month school program. The main building houses thirty two classes from grades kindergarten through 8, and Public School 186 at 306, also located in the Bronx, has eight classes for kindergarten through grade 5 students. Students are identified with various disabilities including depression, oppositional defiant disorder, conduct disorder, cognitively challenged, or learning disabilities. Some students are multiply handicapped and are non-ambulatory. Students are assigned to multi-graded classes of 12:1:1, 12:1:4 or 8:1:1, student to teacher to paraprofessional staffing ratios. They receive appropriate instructional and therapeutic services depending on their level of need. Public School 186 at The Psychiatric Institute at Columbia University, located in Manhattan, has one high school level class. This, interim, short-term placement, serves either hospitalized or day-treatment students. Students at the main site and off-sites participate in either standardized or alternate assessments as indicated on their individual education plan. The student population includes 54% Hispanic, 43% Black, 2% White, and 1% Asian. Sixteen percent are English language learners. The gender split is 78% male to 22% female.

The school's main site is spacious and very well maintained as is the shared space at PS186 at PS 306. This adds to the inviting, nurturing climate of the school.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal, well supported by her cabinet, provides the school with highly effective leadership.
- A positive culture permeates the school building ensuring that every individual is nurtured and respected.
- Students are recognized for their individual social/emotional needs and receive appropriate support.
- Staff works collaboratively to contribute to the nurturing ethos of the school.
- Teachers create learning environments that are engaging and appropriate to the instructional needs of every student.
- The school makes use of available and school generated data to drive instruction to meet the needs of their students.
- Parents feel welcomed and are appreciative of the high level of commitment and instruction given to their children.
- The building is maintained to a high level of cleanliness supporting the nurturing climate of the school.

What the school needs to improve

- Provide classroom teachers with additional support enabling them to teach all the content areas.
- Further develop the integration of content area curriculum into the specialties.
- Continue to address ways in which to increase student attendance.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a well-developed school.

This District 75 special education school gives fragile children an opportunity to be successful. As one parent said “When I first walked into the building, I felt the warmth and acceptance, and if I felt that way, my granddaughter must feel that way.” The principal, well supported by four assistant principals and a skilled professional staff, are committed to enabling every student to ‘reach their personal best.’ The longevity of both administrators and staff highlights the camaraderie and collaborative environment. From the moment that students enter the building where they are greeted by a staff member, the school works diligently to meet the daily challenges of addressing the instructional and social/emotional needs for each of its students. Individual education plans and other data provided through assessments and teacher observations, enable teachers to address instructional needs of students, the majority of whom are placed in the school achieving below standards. Discreet programs for students participating in alternate assessments, maximizes their opportunities for success. A school wide behavior modification plan is in place and is very effective.

The fact that 20 of 35 June 2006 8th grade graduates were integrated into mainstream special education programs in City high schools, and two students were decertified, speaks to this school’s successes. One recent graduate, now in mainstream special education happened by. He shared that as a 4th through 8th grade student at the school he learned to ‘control my behavior’ and ‘got better in my math.’

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 school gathers and uses detailed data on the performance and progress of the school and each of its students. While results on standardized exams are reviewed, they may not be representative of a student’s true ability given the emotional and behavioral issues that impede test taking. Therefore the school relies heavily on the individual education plan, information culled from interim assessments, pre and post assessments for Read 180 and Achieve 3000, the Quick Reading Inventory, early childhood literacy assessment system 2, and portfolios with authentic student work. Results from the New York State English as a second language achievement test identifies areas of need for the English language learners. The New York State alternate assessment data folios and the ‘Brigance,’ an inventory of basic skills, follow the alternate assessment students from year to year. These profiles provide teachers with information regarding instructional needs and enable them to monitor and compare student progress. Additionally teacher observations provide a keen understanding of learning styles and academic needs. Specific to this student population is the data associated with student behavior. Points earned through the school-wide behavior modification program are monitored by teachers and service providers.

Report cards are generated four times a year. They are distributed three times between September and June, and once at the end of the summer. An up-dated progress report from the annual review and a narrative on the social/emotional status of each student is included with each report.

It is difficult to compare this school's performance to another but the school does review its results from standardized tests, year to year. The school also uses internal data to monitor and compare individual student progress during the year and from year to year.

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 well developed.

Most, if not all the students enter the school achieving below standards and exhibiting challenging behavioral needs. The school's overarching goal is that students' don't remain stagnant, that realistic goals are set for each student, and there is overall improvement both academically and socially/emotionally. A teacher of an alternate assessment class stated that her goal is to make her students 'independent to the extent possible and bring them to their personal best.' Academic goals include growth with-in and between levels. A school-wide behavior plan, suitable to each disability, sets goals to develop appropriate and responsible students.

Goal setting is a collaborative process given the number of staff with whom each student interacts. Common preparation times and planned meetings enable teachers to constantly plan together. A team of teachers, service providers and administrators meet regularly to set up the schedule for and assess the impact of academic intervention services. A two tier intervention system provides all students with small group instruction and more at-risk students with one-to one tutorial help. Using detailed data obtained from assessments, teachers complete the annual review, setting goals and objectives for each student. Previous year's student profiles, report cards, and portfolios provide information that is used to plan the next learning steps for each student. Teachers review data from web-based instructional programs focusing on decoding and reading comprehension. By monitoring student work teachers are able to track student successes, target specific areas of need and thus provide differentiated instruction. Students work independently on computers and are actively engaged in their learning and setting goals for themselves. Rubrics prominently displayed provide instructional strategies, procedures for small group work and expectations for behavior. Students feel that their teachers 'teach me right from wrong' and they 'like being challenged and doing regular education work.'

The school shares expectations with parents whose support is vital to their child's academic and social growth. As PS 186 is not a neighborhood school parents may not be able to visit often. Constant communication by service providers, the parent coordinator, and school staff encourages a two way sharing of information. Parents are encouraged to be part of creating successes for their children and are provided with strategies that are congruent with the school's goals. They see immense differences as their children progress both academically and socially.

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's instructional program, behavior modification program, and allocation of the budget are well aligned with the needs of the students. An emphasis on instructional programs and materials that engage students is school-wide. Laptops are now available in middle school classrooms. Points earned weekly for positive behavior can be 'spent' in the school store. For alternate assessment students a multi-sensory program using manipulatives, pictures, and sign language is incorporated into the daily classroom program. Sign language enables teachers to communicate with the non-verbal student. Teachers and paraprofessionals work with small groups of students motivating them to learn. 'Everyday Math' and 'Impact' math activities are selected and differentiated for students. The workshop model for English language arts supports students becoming good readers and writers. Students' portfolios, teachers' conferring notes and running records helps drives instruction. Leveled libraries enable students to meet with success. Data from computer-based Read 180 and Achieve 3000 identifies students who need additional teacher-directed reinforcement. Services for English language learners are specific to student's needs. The school does not departmentalize on the middle school and therefore homeroom teachers are responsible for teaching all content areas. Teachers across the curriculum areas confer in order to share ideas and implement strategies. A social studies project on 'Colonial Times' was supported with computer-based research and art projects. Although teachers are now integrating content area curriculum into the specialties to support under-achieving fragile students, the school does not have an organized manner in which this is accomplished.

All staff members are actively engaged in supporting students. They are positioned at doorways and throughout the school during arrival and dismissal creating smooth transitions. A school based option enables teachers to be with their students during breakfast and lunch limiting stressful situations. Unit coordinators provide support for students and professional development for teachers. Related service providers, paraprofessionals and other staff are all part of meeting the needs of each student. Each of ten service providers is assigned to students for mandated services and other support. Students know they have someone to "work together with to solve problems," and if they are absent the school will be calling and they are still responsible for homework. While many of the students are fragile and attendance may be affected by multiple issues, the school does not see 83% as good enough in line with its high expectations. They recognize students with good attendance in a hallway showcase and a newsletter.

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 well developed.

The school carefully selects staff using a range of criteria including interview, meetings with administrators, observing classes, and modeling lessons. Teachers must understand the population with whom they will be working and the commitment needed to meet the instructional and behavioral challenges. Service providers are chosen for their ability and sensitivity. This school is very successful in both the selection and retention of staff. Many staff members have been with the school well over 15 years and show a high level of dedication to maintaining the high standards.

Professional development is predicated on the need to improve instruction and student outcomes. Teachers are involved with on-going school-based opportunities and off-site

workshops. Bi-weekly working lunches led by a unit coordinator allow teachers to review portfolio requirements for the alternate assessment. Common meeting times are built into the schedule and teachers use these as opportunities to share ideas, discuss implementation strategies, and student specific issues. Inter-visitations and mentoring enable teachers to support each other. The challenge is to provide additional opportunities for teachers to develop teaching expertise in all areas and for the school to provide additional teaching support in content areas. The literacy coach visits classes on a regular basis and provides feedback. A district mathematics coach meets once a week with teachers. Her own experience of differentiating instruction for emotionally disturbed students is proving to be very helpful by providing practical suggestions. Teachers are extremely supportive of each other and welcome opportunities for inter-visitations. After school workshops are supporting the implementation of the Columbia University Teachers College reading and writing curriculum. A videotape of a teacher conferencing with a student modeled this strategy and allowed for in-depth discussion. Opportunities are provided for teachers to participate in professional development at their home site as well as across sites.

The principal and the assistant principals regularly observe teaching. They all share in the responsibility of creating a pool of highly skilled staff. The teachers see a school where they have a “wide variety of opportunities to be successful.” One of the unit co-ordinators is turn-keying training on the alternate assessment. Teachers from both sites participate. The entire school community is focused on creating a school where students want to be, can be successful academically, and learn appropriate behaviors.

The principal is well respected and the teachers are appreciative of her ‘open-door’ policy. Well supported by her assistant principals, school procedures are clear and well communicated to staff, parents, and students. Every child is known by his or her name. The support offered by the service providers is to student and family. Parents are welcomed and know they can find help for many troubling situations. Service providers maintain working relationships with outside agencies in order to address any emergency that may arise.

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 well developed.

The principal and her cabinet have a high level of energy and commitment to maintaining a school where students grow academically and behaviorally. The Comprehensive Education Plan embodies the goals of the school encompassing the needs of each site. It is constantly being revisited and revised. Monthly meetings of the school leadership team encourage input from all constituents. Data culled from interim assessments, standardized assessments, and teacher observations focuses staff on what is working and what might need to be revised. On-going evaluation of student progress and performance offers opportunities for them to return to the mainstream. Teachers were involved in refining arrival and dismissal procedures and the ‘tweaking’ of the school’s behavior modification plan even included students. As an out-growth of the quality review, teachers will be part of a professional development workshop looking at and using data to support their students. The school is always looking at ways to be better and address the needs of their school population.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: The Walter Damrosch Day Treatment School (PS 186)	∅	✓	+
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.	∅	✓	+
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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
Overall score for Quality Statement 3			X
Quality Statement 4 – Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.			∅ ✓ +
4.1 Leaders, faculty, and staff are selected based on their high expectations for student performance and progress and based on their commitment and capacity to use data, compare outcomes within and across classrooms and schools and develop and revise plans and methods to improve performance and progress.			X
4.2 Professional development decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes. Professional development is designed to help leaders, faculty, and staff use data, self- and peer-assessments, and collaboration with peers to achieve goals for improved school and student outcomes. Professional development and self- and peer-evaluation are aligned and overlap.			X
4.3 The principal frequently observes classroom teaching and has a considered strategy for improving the quality of each teacher's instruction. Teachers frequently observe and support each other's classroom instruction with the goal of improving student outcomes.			X
4.4 Planning, evaluation of results, and revision of plans takes place in teams. Leaders and faculty inform each other of their goals and results, candidly evaluate themselves and each other, and use what is learned to drive improvement.			X
4.5 The principal is respected and has capacity to effect change.			X
4.6 The school runs smoothly. Procedures are clear, communicated to all, and are generally followed.			X
4.7 The school aligns youth development and support services around stated academic goals. Partnerships with outside bodies are routinely used to achieve academic goals.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 4			X
Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.			∅ ✓ +
5.1 All school plans and other interventions include frequent interim goals and diagnostic assessments of progress designed to reveal in objectively measurable ways whether the plan is being effectively implemented and reaching stated goals.			X
5.2 Comparisons of student progress within and across classrooms and schools are used in making interim diagnostic assessments and measuring the progress of plans and interventions.			X
5.3 Information generated by periodic assessments and diagnostic measures of progress and comparisons is used to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals. Interim and final goals are modified when data objectively demonstrate that revision is required.			X
5.4 Each plan's interim and final outcomes drive successive phases of goal setting and improvement planning, and each successive phase is characterized by agile and flexible realignment of practices and resources to improve student academic outcomes.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 5			X