



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

George V. Brower School

Elementary School 289

**900 St. Marks Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11213**

Principal: Dennis Jeffers

Dates of review: March 14 - 17, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Mick Megee

Content of the report

Part 1: The School Context

Information about the school

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well
What the school needs to improve

Part 3: Main Findings

Progress made since the last review
Overall evaluation
How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

George V. Brower School is an elementary school with 792 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 84% Black, 9% Hispanic, 2% White, and 5% Asian students. The student body includes 2% English language learners and 11% special education students. Boys account for 54% of the students enrolled and girls account for 46%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 90.4%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 84% eligibility.

The school shares its building with another school.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal works hard to gain the commitment of the whole school community to his clear vision for the future of the school.
- The school's good understanding of the needs and capabilities of special education students enables them to make good progress.
- Staff quickly identify those in most need of improvement and make use of effective strategies so their progress improves.
- Parents and students like and understand the school's effective system for managing and rewarding good behavior.
- The trusting and respectful relationships all round the school enable students to learn well.
- The school gives good support to teachers who are new to the profession so that they quickly become effective.
- The school provides good professional development opportunities to teachers so that they constantly update their skills.
- Teachers frequently take the time to visit each other's lessons and to share good practice.
- The principal ensures that the school's day-to-day running is smooth and effective.

What the school needs to improve

- Track the progress of the different groups and cohorts of students so that teachers can make use of this information when planning instruction.
- Improve differentiation by ensuring that teachers always set challenging activities for highest-achieving students.
- Ensure that students have a good understanding of their own goals.
- Set objectively measurable final and interim goals for improvement particularly for the different groups in the school.
- Ensure that there is an effective partnership with all parents so that there is a common understanding of how each student can be supported.
- Ensure that medical support is always of the highest standard.

Part 3: Main Findings

Progress made since the last review

The school has made good progress in addressing the issues identified in the previous Quality Review report.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

The principal leads and manages the school well. He has brought about a calm and industrious learning environment through putting in place policies and procedures that all staff apply consistently. He makes sure that teachers receive all the support they need and have frequent opportunities for professional development. Teachers share good practice together well, and new teachers benefit from the experience and advice of their more seasoned colleagues. There is continuing improvement in teachers' use of data and the setting of goals, especially for individual students. The school's focus on gathering quality data and using it effectively brings about rapid improvement for special education students and those in most need of improvement. However, not all teachers provide sufficient challenge for the highest-achieving students. This means they do not all make the level of progress they could.

The school is beginning to focus on the progress of different groups of students, but the practice is not yet strongly embedded. It does not do enough analysis of how well girls and boys or students from different ethnic backgrounds are doing in comparison with one another. It sets individual goals for improvement, but students are not clear about these so that they understand how they can achieve them. The school has not yet developed strong expertise in setting and regularly monitoring whole school final and interim achievement goals. This means that it cannot yet ensure that it continually maintains good progress. The inquiry team is running effectively. It is providing targeted programs to 15 fifth grade students who are underachieving in English language arts. It is still too early to say what the final outcomes will be, but early signs are that students are making good progress. Since the last Quality Review, the school now has in place procedures for setting individual and whole school goals. The school has analyzed its results and compared them with schools in its peer horizon and across the City. The school now regularly seeks the views of students and parents and acts upon their observations.

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 the student's progress over time.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school has increased the range of data that it gathers on student achievement. It uses this data efficiently to gain an understanding of the specific areas of weakness in individual students. Teachers take account of this information when planning instruction.

Students say that some teachers give them their home telephone numbers in order to reach out to those who are causing concern. Because of this focus on the individual, the school is effective in giving good support to special education students and to those who are struggling. The school marshals together the information well when staff draw up individual action plans. As a result, these students make good progress.

The school is not so effective in gathering data on the performance or progress of the different gender or ethnic groups within the school. Nor is it effectively tracking the achievement of the different cohorts of students. This means that teachers do not have the benefit of complete information to use when planning instruction. This information is useful in identifying clearly why there are some pockets of underachievement by, for example, highest-achieving students in grade 5. The inquiry team is providing the school with a good model of how to go about this and demonstrating to teachers the necessity of having good data to improve instruction and raise achievement. The school is beginning to compare itself with other schools, especially those whose student population shares similar characteristics. The principal meets with other principals and shares good strategies and practice.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student’s next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each student’s learning.

This area of the school’s work is proficient.

There is good collaboration between the administration and faculty to plan for improvements in student achievement. Goals are set with timeframes but success indicators are not always specific enough or clearly based on past performance. For example, many goals this year, whether for the whole school or for subjects, have been set at the same level. This means that those goals may well be unrealistic or too easy to achieve. Most teachers use the data to identify areas for improvement for individual students and to set individual goals. However, not all students have a clear enough understanding of their own goals. For example, when asked what their goals are, many students say what occupation they want when they grow up or that their goal is to “achieve a Level 3 or 4”. They say this whatever their current level of achievement. This makes it difficult for them to know precisely what to do to improve.

There are effective programs that provide good support for students in the most need of improvement. Students at risk receive targeted services and intervention programs based on student data are utilized well to bring students up to speed. Goal setting for the different groups of students is at quite an early stage of development. The inquiry team is doing good work in demonstrating how goal setting, based on past performance, can drive forward achievement for the students in the most need of improvement. All parents really appreciate the regular monthly progress reports they receive from the school. However, a significant minority of parents said in a recent survey that they felt that the school could do more to listen to their ideas and suggestions about the learning needs of their children.

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.

This area of the school’s work is proficient.

The curriculum is broad, balanced and efficiently organized. However, financial constraints have meant that the school has suddenly had to drop its effective after-school lessons for students who needed extra help with their work. These classes were a key factor in assisting students who had fallen behind to catch up quickly. During the school day there is a good focus on identifying strategies, or commercial curriculum packages, that support students who are struggling with their work. A good example of this is the school’s introduction of Read 180, to the acclaim of parents, students and teachers. As one parent said, “My child was on a Level 2, and they put her on this excellent program. Within 3 months she was on a Level 4.”

An example of where the school has made effective financial decisions to overcome identified problems is in its use of the commercial program Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS). Staff and students say that the consistent application of this program has resulted in significant reduction in behavior-related incidents in the school, and assisted teachers in getting students ready for learning more quickly. Because of this, there have been no suspensions of students over the last two years. As one teacher said, “PBIS has changed the whole tone of the school for the better.” Staff and students trust and respect one another, and relationships around the school are very positive. As one student said, “The teachers are very nice. They think up new things for us to do.”

Teachers are beginning to incorporate insights from the wider range of data they have on individuals into their planning. This is a good step forward, and it means that teachers are matching activities more accurately to suit the different levels of ability in many classes. However, there are still not enough activities that challenge the higher achieving students. These students often finish work more quickly and have to wait until the others have caught up. This prevents them progressing even more quickly.

Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school’s collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

This area of the school’s work is proficient.

The administration carries out frequent regular formal observations of lessons, which staff welcome. Teachers say that they find the discussions with senior staff very useful and this helps them to improve their own performance in the classroom. The school encourages teachers to visit each other’s lessons and to comment and draw upon the good practice that they see. Most of the teachers have been at the school a long time. Teachers who are new to the school find the staff very encouraging and welcoming. They find their advice and modeling drawn from their long experience to be indispensable. As one new teacher said, “I feel very comfortable here and I would not have survived without everybody’s help and support.” This is mutually rewarding. As one older teacher said, “It’s a joy to see these young teachers grow to become master teachers.”

The school has a range of services to support students' personal and academic achievement. Parents reported at a meeting with the reviewer that high professional standards are not always maintained in the medical center. The principal investigated this during the review and agreed immediate steps to resolve the problem. The principal manages the school well, and, as a consequence, students and staff feel at ease in the calm and respectful culture that pervades the school. All staff, led by the principal, constantly reinforce expectations of good behavior. One student said, "The principal here is great. He pops right up everywhere. But he tries hard never to suspend." The school has developed professional links with a number of schools, including the school occupying the same building. It makes regular use of local facilities, such as the children's museum, for educational visits.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

There is in the school an appropriately collaborative approach to strategic planning. However, the school's strategic plans are not as effective as they could be, because they do not contain consistently precise interim goals either for the whole school or for the different groups of students within the school. This means that it is difficult for the school to respond quickly to any issues across the whole school and to make any necessary adjustments quickly to plans and strategies. Where the school has set interim and final goals, these often do not relate to previous performance and so are unrealistic or too easy to achieve. This in turn makes it difficult to use these outcomes effectively for driving the next stage of improvement planning.

Within the classroom, teachers set interim goals for individual students which are measurable and have time frames. Staff review each student's progress towards these goals through periodic assessments. Individual conferences are held regularly with each student to discuss the current level of progress and to revise or re-set goals for the next period. Through this process, individual progress is accelerated.

The school is effective in measuring the quality of teachers' instruction and their interactions with students. The administration does well in formally providing teachers with unambiguous information on what they need to do next in order to improve further, and when they expect the improvements to be in place.

The principal has a clear vision for the future of the school, and works hard to gain and retain the commitment of all the school community to continuous improvement. One teacher said, "This is a very effective principal. He's very supportive, hands-on and visible. And his door is always open."

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: George V. Brower School	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
Quality Score			X		

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather and generate data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor the students progress over time.

To what extent do school leaders and faculty provide . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
1.1 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of each student, classroom, grade level?			X		
1.2 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of special education students?				X	
1.3 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of English language learners?			X		
1.4 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of ethnic groups, gender groups and all other categories of interest to the school?		X			
1.5 a measurement of performance and progress based on the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grades and subject areas?			X		
1.6 a measurement of performance and progress based on comparisons with similar schools?			X		
1.7 training, management systems and structures that support teachers in the use of school data to inform planning and instruction and to track the progress of students?			X		
Overall score for Quality Statement 1			X		

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each students learning.

To what extent do school leaders and faculty . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
2.1 engage in collaborative processes to set rigorous, objectively measurable goals for improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals?		X			
2.2 focus 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 identify and improve the performance and progress of those students in greatest need of improvement?				X	
2.4 share whole school goals with all members of the school community to rigorously improve the performance and progress of students?			X		
2.5 convey consistently high expectations to students and their parents/caregivers?			X		
2.6 regularly provide students and their parents/caregivers with information about the goals set for each student, and about each student's progress and performance, and how they can improve?			X		
2.7 invite and enable parents/caregivers to provide useful information to teachers and the school about the learning needs and capacities of their children?		X			
Overall score for Quality Statement 2			X		

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.

To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
3.1 select core curricular approaches that facilitate and provide meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and focus on raising the achievement of students?			X		
3.2 provide a broad and engaging curriculum, including the arts, to enhance learning both within and outside the school day?			X		
3.3 hold teachers accountable for the progress and learning of the students in their charge, for making instruction interesting and compelling, and for creating a positive safe and inclusive learning environment?			X		
3.4 ensure that teachers use school, class and student data to plan for and provide differentiated instruction that meets the specific needs of all the students in their charge?		X			
3.5 make budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions strategically, based on data, to meet the school's academic goals for all students?			X		
3.6 ensure that there is an environment of mutual trust and respect between all staff and students to support personal and academic development?				X	
3.7 ensure that there are effective and consistently applied procedures to encourage and monitor student attendance and tardiness?			X		
Overall score for Quality Statement 3			X		

Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school’s collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.					
To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
4.1 use frequent observations of classroom teaching by the principal and other available information to develop a differentiated strategy for improving the quality of each teacher’s instruction?			X		
4.2 make professional development decisions strategically, based on data, to help meet the improvement goals of students and teachers?			X		
4.3 provide frequent opportunities for teachers to observe each other’s classroom instruction and to meet together in teams to plan, share effective practices, and evaluate one another’s instruction in an open and reflective professional environment?				X	
4.4 develop effective procedures for the induction and support of teachers who are new to the profession or the school?				X	
4.5 align youth development, guidance/advising and other student support services around stated academic and personal development goals?		X			
4.6 consistently implement clear procedures that enable the school to run smoothly and encourage effective student learning, and effectively address discipline related incidents?				X	
4.7 create effective partnerships with outside entities that support the academic and personal growth of the students?			X		
Overall score for Quality Statement 4					
			X		

Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student’s progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.					
To what extent do . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?		X			
5.2 the school’s plans for improving teacher outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?			X		
5.3 teachers and faculty use periodic assessments and other diagnostic tools to measure the effectiveness of plans and interventions for individual and groups of students in key areas?			X		
5.4 teachers and faculty use the information generated by periodic assessments and other progress measures and comparisons to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals?			X		
5.5 school leaders track the outcomes of periodic assessments and other diagnostic measures and use the results to makes strategic decisions to modify practices to improve student outcomes?			X		
5.6 school leaders and staff use each plan’s interim and final outcomes to drive the next stage of goal setting and improvement planning?			X		
5.7 the principal and school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to effect change?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 5					
			X		

◇	Outstanding
+	Well Developed
✓	Proficient
➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features
Δ	Underdeveloped