



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

The Brooklyn Transition Center

High School 373

185 Ellery Street

Brooklyn

NY 11206

Principal: Valerie Miller

Dates of review: May 15 - 16, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Jeffery Plumb

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

The Brooklyn Transition Center is a special education high school with 381 students from grade 9 through grade 12, and beyond. The school population comprises 64% Black, 28% Hispanic, 6% White, 1.5% Asian, and 0.5% Native American students. The student body includes 6.5% English language learners. Boys significantly outnumber girls in the emotional difficulties and autistic populations, but ratios are similar in the profound and multiple learning difficulties population. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 83.1%. The school is not in receipt of Title 1 funding.

Students have severe and complex learning difficulties, which include learning disabled, emotional difficulties, autism and profound and multiple learning difficulties. Some students do not graduate until they are 21 years of age. All students have an individual education plan and follow an alternate assessment program. There are two distinct programs: high school instruction and a transition program that provides students with relevant work site experience. In addition to the main school site, there are two high school and two college inclusion sites, where students are included with general education students in less restrictive learning environments. The principal has been in post for three months.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal provides effective instructional leadership and has brought about change that accelerates students' learning.
- The data team provides good professional development in the analysis and use of data.
- There is a good connection between the assessment of students' needs, their set goals and their learning opportunities in lessons.
- The individual education plan tracker form is an effective tool for monitoring student progress over time.
- The work-study program equips students' well for entering employment when they graduate from college.
- The school is successful in increasing the number of students returned to a less restrictive learning environment.
- The school uses effective strategies to improve attendance and discourage tardiness.

What the school needs to improve

- Analyze student data across classes of the same population of need in order to target professional development to improve instruction.
- Take more decisive action to address student needs in response to the data which shows where particular groups perform less well than others
- Continue to develop the confidence of all teachers in analyzing and using data to improve their instruction.
- Review the timing of the transition fair to give parents more time to help their children find suitable work site placements.

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 Brooklyn Transition Center has responded positively to the recommendations made in the last Quality Review and successfully managed change to bring about improvements in instruction and raised student achievement. The inquiry team has made a good start in analyzing data about behavior patterns based on the gender groupings and the school has taken decisive action to improve behavior. It is successful in this area. The principal provides effective instructional leadership. Good management systems are in place to accelerate student learning, but not all faculty members implement these systems consistently. The data team provides good professional development for faculty on the analysis and use of data. Teachers are becoming more adept at using data to differentiate their instruction. However, a few teachers are less confident than the majority in using data to plan and realigning their instruction to better meet student needs. Assessment of students' learning difficulties is used well to set individual goals to raise their achievement. Careful attention is paid to these goals in lesson planning. Consequently, a model is in place that uses assessment and goals to impact positively on student learning. The individual education plan tracker form is a very effective tool for monitoring student progress over time.

Lesson observations are used well to identify teachers' needs and target additional support where it is most needed. However, the administration does not hone in sharply enough on the performance of similar populations across classes. For example, a new method has been introduced to teach the autistic students, but analysis of improved communication and behavior based on data across the autistic classes has not been analyzed. The school has made a good start at analyzing data on the performance of different ethnic groups. It has discovered that Hispanic students do not make such good progress in reading as other ethnic groups, but decisive action to plan to raise their achievement has not yet taken place.

The work-study program effectively enables students with severe and complex learning difficulties to secure competitive employment when they graduate. The transition fair supports parents/guardians well in making choices about work placements for their children. However, parents would like the transition fair earlier in the school year to give them more time to prepare their children for the best transition opportunities and to learn sooner about the service agencies out there to support them. A significant strength of the school is the number of students who have successfully returned to a less restrictive learning environment over the past year.

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 gathers a good range of qualitative and quantitative data to understand student achievement. Brigance assessment is used effectively to find out what each student knows and can do. The individual education plan tracker tool is used well to monitor students' progress, though a few faculty members are not as secure as the majority in collecting and using data. Data is gathered about classes from lesson observations and used to target additional support where it is most needed. However, the analysis of the academic performance of student subgroups, such as autistic students, is not sufficiently robust.

Mandated testing for English language learners in District 75 schools is a recent development, and the school is beginning to gather data about the achievement of these students. However, understandably it is struggling to make sense of what this testing means in the context of students with severe and complex pragmatic and semantic language difficulties. It has not yet set specific goals related to their improved acquisition of the use of English language, and indeed on reflection may continue with its goal setting related to communication in the context of students learning difficulties. Achievement data in reading is compared across different ethnic groups, but is not yet acted upon to plan to raise achievement for any group causing concern.

Good gender data about behavior is gathered and used to develop behavioral plans. The administration has collected data about students' gains in learning using the pacing calendars and units of study provided by District 75 and uses its findings to inform a more project-based curriculum to improve student motivation for learning. Teachers visited a school for students with autism in Queens, but benchmarking performance against similar schools is still a new practice for the school. Effective use is made of the data team to build teachers confidence in using data to improve their instruction and to hone their skills in tracking student progress over time.

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.

Good use is made of Brigance data to set relevant learning goals for each student. Each student has a tailor-made individual learning program. Nearly all teachers make effective use of these goals in their lesson planning to match work to students' needs to accelerate their learning, but a few are not so adept in doing so. Clear behavioral goals are set for students with the most challenging behaviors using data gathered from the school wide intervention system. These processes lead to improved small steps of improved behavior and accelerated learning for students.

Skilful use is made of the weekly collaborative meeting of faculty who work with the same populations of special educational needs for mutual support in using data to set the next steps for student learning. For example, data indicated that students in a one class show

autistic tendencies, and so the teacher of that class was scheduled to meet and plan with a group of teachers from the autistic classes. This has resulted in improved goal setting for the students in this class. The school has identified that Hispanic students within the learning difficulty population underperform in reading compared with other ethnic groups within the same population of need, but has not yet set a goal to raise their achievement.

Parents and caregivers are regularly kept up to date about their children's academic and social development goals and progress in reaching them through individual education plan review meetings and the report cards they receive four times a year.

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 administration has skillfully designed a core curriculum, which meets students' needs and enables faculty to plan to meet the requirements of the State alternate assessments. A few teachers lack confidence in its delivery, though they are well supported by the school's literacy coach. Assessment and content are aligned to engage students' interest and accelerate their learning. Typically, life-relevant goals for individual students are planned and successfully met through differentiated instruction. For example, a student assessed as requiring the skill to write in a relevant life context had an individual education plan goal to address a letter envelope. He met his goal. A curriculum has been launched to improve the communication and independence skills for autistic pupils, but it is too early to evaluate its effectiveness. The work-study program is of high quality and enables students to find a job when they leave college. Good art and technology programs are in place, and students appreciate the Friday dance and drumming clubs.

The principal holds teachers accountable through regular lesson observations and frequent scrutiny of students' binders. Teachers needing support are given goals to improve their instruction. Based on data, the administration makes effective budgeting, staffing, and scheduling decisions that accelerate student learning. Students trust their teachers and the school's administration, and attendance exceeds the district average. An analysis of data showed that students who traveled to school independently were often late at the start of the day. A punch card system to record their time of arrival was introduced. This has improved their punctuality because as a student says, "It makes us feel grown up."

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 well developed.

The principal conducts formal lesson observations on the main site according to the tenure model requirements and frequently engages in a walkthrough of lessons. Assistant principals conduct observations of the students on work site placements and the inclusion sites. Evaluation of lessons is thorough, and links the impact of teaching on learning very well. Robust feedback is given to teachers to help them better differentiate their instruction and raise student achievement. Teachers identified as less effective are given focused support from the school's coach. Intervisitations are used well to improve

teaching. The peer model of support and challenge lies at the heart of this rapidly improving school.

Support for new teachers is satisfactory. Related services play a valuable part in the emotional and personal development of students. Guidance counselors go the extra mile and support students not mandated for counseling as well as those who have counseling identified in their individual education plans. Parents, students, and teachers say that the school runs smoothly because of the open and effective lines of communication. A wide range of partnerships support the work related program well. Before graduation, students are effectively aligned with relevant adult support agencies to support them in their employment and as far as possible to live independent lives.

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.

The school's Comprehensive Education Plan has long-term goals focused on raising student achievement, milestones, and time-bound objectives to reach the goals. The whole school community is involved in school planning. The individual education plan tracker form enables teachers to monitor students' progress towards the interim objectives to meet their annual goals. Once an objective is mastered a student is moved with pace on to the next objective. If goals are reached before the end of the year, an individual education planning meeting is called early and new achievement goals are set. Similarly, when a student fails to meet a milestone objective on two occasions, a meeting is called to review and reset that student's goals immediately. This is a very effective system and ensures that planning is flexible and that student achievement goals are kept under constant review. However, the system is new and a few teachers require more support in implementing this tracking tool.

Assessments feed well into the lesson planning of the majority of teachers to move students forward in important areas.. Increasingly, teachers group students based on periodic assessment data about their strengths and weaknesses. They give them challenging activities to move them on towards their achievement goals. The principal has a clear vision and a strategic plan to get all teachers up to speed with analyzing assessment data and using it to improve their instruction. Resources and professional development is increasingly targeted at teachers most in need. The principal has a clear vision for the future development of the school. In a short space of time, she has begun to manage change, which has benefited the whole school community.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: The Brooklyn Transition Center	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