



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

**Bushwick Leaders High School for Academic
Excellence**

**High School 556
797 Bushwick Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11221**

Principal: Catherine Reilly

Dates of review: April 10 - 11, 2008

Lead Reviewer: George Wallace

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Bushwick Leaders High School for Academic Excellence has 447 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 16.5% Black, 82% Hispanic, 0.5% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 24% English language learners and 17% special education students. Boys account for 41% of the students enrolled and girls account for 59%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 81.8%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 86% eligibility.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school runs very smoothly and provides students with a very positive atmosphere in a safe and supportive environment in which to learn.
- Student relationships with their peers and teachers are very good, and students have a valued active voice in the school.
- The principal knows her school, staff and students extremely well and is good at involving staff to collaborate on developments through distributive leadership.
- Students value their advisory program and feel that the school provides good levels of support for their personal and social, as well as their academic, development.
- Good school data analysis has led to the identification of subgroups of students including those in greatest need of both academic and personal development.
- Staff use student performance data well to inform parents and students about students' progress and the areas in which they need to improve.
- The school budget is used extremely well and scheduling is thoughtful, both of which ensure good resources and better motivation of students.
- Teachers know they are accountable for students' academic, personal and social development and increasingly use of agreed procedures to enables this to happen.
- The school has extremely effective partnerships with other schools and outside agencies that continue to bring a wide range of benefits to the school.
- Teachers are reflective and work diligently to enable maximise student participation in class, especially in promoting their thinking and analytical skills.

What the school needs to improve

- Implement and maintain clear strategies to improve attendance.
- Take steps to broaden the overall curriculum experience for students.
- Sharpen whole school annual planning so that all goals including interim, measurable benchmarks that are easily evaluated against their success criteria.
- Create a system that communicates specific, whole school goals to staff including short-term targets that can be used to drive the next stage of planning.
- Improve and embed teachers' strategies for differentiated instruction to develop consistency across the school.

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 well developed

The school provides students with a safe, highly supportive, and very positive learning environment. Relationships throughout are good and students value the small school family atmosphere. They feel well supported in their learning, receiving frequent feedback on their progress as well as advice and guidance for college and careers. The curriculum is suitably broad, but restricted due to the school's small size. However, senior leaders are well aware of this and continue to take steps to provide new courses such as music and drama as well as productive curriculum links with other schools. The use of the budget and other funding and support is excellent. Scheduling is creative. Overall attendance is low. Students and parents are very pleased with the high quality of support and guidance students receive. They find it easy to contact appropriate staff and value the conversations. Students also enjoy good feedback on their work.

Staff collaboration is strong, incorporating a high level of delegated management responsibilities. Therefore, staff know each other well and fully accept their responsibilities for students' academic achievements and also their personal and social development. The principal knows her school, staff, and students extremely well. She and other key staff analyze and use data well. As a result, many staff fully understand data, its value and use for student development. Consequently, lessons are frequently differentiated and students' performance and progress are efficiently tracked. The inquiry team has also made a difference in the quality of teaching. Their findings have improved student and teacher understanding of effective note taking. School planning is clearly focused on raising students' achievements and, as such, there are many strategies in place to secure improvements, however actual goals are insufficiently measurable. The school has made good progress towards implementing five of the six areas for improvement arising from the last Quality Review. For example, the school has improved data use and expectations of students are consistently high, but interim goals are not yet fully in place.

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 well developed.

The school works with a wide variety of relevant and useful data. Lead teachers use data regularly at department and other planning meetings. Staff have received induction

in the value and ways of, using data to aid their lesson planning. In addition, they recognize the importance of using comparative data to track students' progress and through assessment provide good feedback to support their learning. Much feedback takes the form of general comments to promote self-esteem, but also advice on what worked well and what could be done to improve their work. Students also have online access to their own transcripts. All teachers have information about student performance in all subjects. This is updated frequently and departments often examine such information at grade and subject levels for each class and student to determine anomalies, patterns and trends. For example, there are instances when students perform exceptionally well with one teacher and not another. When this is discovered, meetings between teachers and separately with the student occur to find out why and what can be transferred in terms of skills, approaches to teaching, and use of resources from the strong lesson performance to the weaker.

Whole school data analysis has led to the identification of subgroups of students in greatest need of improvement, whether in their academic work or personal development. In many cases, solutions have been successfully found to improve student progress and performance as well as to modify practice, as a result of strong reflections on qualities of teaching. Examination of data has led the inquiry team to conclude that note taking by students is too passive. A program to introduce teachers to more active forms of student note taking is scheduled. The school has successfully identified patterns and trends of student performance. In some instances, the school's response has been highly successful, in others it is work in progress. Data collection for special education students and English language learners is extremely good. Use of such information has led to significant improvements in performance, for example, of the lowest third of Hispanic students in math and English language arts. Comparison of data with similar schools is useful, but more important are the links arising from close cooperation to share and generate ideas, successful practices and provide new courses. Support, training and guidance for teachers in their use of data is good.

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 well developed.

Collaboration among staff is strong. Such levels of sharing and planning are a product of the positive spirit of the school. Consequently, the school's support structures are able to aid student learning and personal development. Students meet, not only with their teachers, but also their advisor, counselor, and in some cases an external mentor. The programs are put together based on need and goals set in partnership with students as required. The school is good at identifying focus areas and successfully addressing them. For example, this year the school will graduate its second group of students, which has inspired a particular focus on increasing the number earning an advanced Regents' Diploma while also ensuring that the number gaining a diploma *per_se* increases. This means that credit recovery and revised learning programs are in place after school and on Saturdays. The school continues to successfully devise strategies to aid the development of those students in greatest need of improvement. Success comes from both the adjustments to courses provided and the nature and style of advice from personnel. The school is recognized as 'closing the achievement gap' for the second year. Whole school goals are shared across the school community, but interim

steps are not always clearly understood.. Students and parents recognize that the school has high expectations of students' learning. The school also provides parents with plenty of information about their child's progress and performance, and parents feel that they are well informed about what is happening at school. In addition, communication through electronic means has increased attendance at some functions. Parents feel that it is easy to talk with staff and that they are responsive to their needs.

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 well developed.

The curriculum provides the school with plenty of invaluable data. This information is analyzed and used widely to provide a focus on raising student achievement both generally and through targeted groups. The curriculum is suitably broad and expanding as the school continues to develop. This year is the first in which physical education has been offered. Presently the school has no gymnasium, but a sports program linked with a neighboring school is proving successful. The arts are beginning to flourish, especially music and a science lab is due to open very soon, and parents and students welcome an element of community service built into the curriculum. However, there are not enough electives or advanced placement courses.

Teachers recognize that they are accountable for students' learning. Staff work well together in departments and across grades to ensure that core policies regarding approaches to teaching are adhered to and developed. The carefully crafted Socratic seminar approach is having a positive impact on students' listening, summarizing, and logical thinking skills. Teachers use item analysis from their own assessments and standardized tests to aid their planning and differentiate students' learning. There are good examples of differentiation, especially through questioning, but also through differentiated tasks. Teachers' understanding of students' preferred learning styles is developing.

The budget is used extremely well, and good use of data has enabled the school to allocate resources where they are most needed. Links with other schools and outside partnerships have also ensured very good use of financial and other resources. Trust and respect between personnel is strong. The school also has many ways to students' personal development as well as the academic. Attendance remains much too low, but the school is aware of this and continually reviews strategies to secure greater attendance. The continued decrease over recent years is due in part to the increasing enrollment, which, for the school's first graduation year 2006-07, was 417.

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 senior leaders have good consistent methods of monitoring the quality of teaching and learning. While there are common formal systems, they also use a very useful

checklist/reflective sheet for daily walkthroughs. Agreements on qualities of teaching are based on the California Standards. To ensure a common standard of feedback, the principal reads all findings before conversations with teachers occur. The whole process is designed to ensure that agreed procedures are in place and also to provide immediate support for teachers or ensure that appropriate professional development is provided. Teachers feel well supported and value the professional development program. They are aware that the focus has been and is on data analysis and use, literacy across the curriculum and differentiation in the pursuit of raising student achievement.

Guidance and advice for students is taken very seriously. Students value the advisory program and over four years has built a significant level of trust between students and their advisory teachers. Some students have personal mentors, and some are counseled into one of many support programs including credit recovery courses, intervention services, and Saturday school. Twice a year there are student surveys to gauge levels of satisfaction with the school's programs. The school runs very smoothly. The principal is very well known and respected and she, with her colleagues, has established routines that encourage both effective learning and good discipline. Partnerships with outside organizations are very strong, especially one link that has improved the school's financial planning and electronic facilities significantly. Other relationships are robust and include a range of community links including work with other schools.

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 well developed.

The principal uses the school's Comprehensive Education Plan as a working document for school improvement. While the goals are clear, they are not sufficiently measurable nor are there clear interim benchmarks. However, goals are known by staff, are evaluated at the end of the school year and adjustments to programs or strategies are made during the year. The core plans are discussed extensively and the collaborative nature of the school ensures that all staff know the reasons for the key development goals. Staff recruitment is a strong feature and the senior leaders know the strengths and areas for improvement of staff such that the professional development programs satisfy their needs. Periodic assessments are in place and used well to measure the effectiveness of students' learning and to inform required adjustments to programs when necessary. Data is used widely and is the basis of several meetings to aid discussion about next steps in course programs or in students' learning. Where appropriate the leaders of such meetings ensure that revisions to their programs are made, and especially changes to the way in which topics are taught. School leaders track student performance from the periodic assessments. They know whether students are on course for success and at what level. Consequently they discuss with other leaders the revisions to practice needed to secure improvements. The next stage of school improvement is driven by a thorough knowledge of what is happening in school, the effectiveness of procedures, and the efficiency of staff in translating planned improvements into classroom instruction. While end of year evaluations of key development goals occur, there are no formal interim evaluations. Nevertheless, the principal has a clear vision for the school, shared by a youthful, committed, and energetic staff who have the capacity to effect change.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Bushwick Leaders HS for Academic Excellence	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