



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

South Brooklyn Community High School

High School K698

**173 Conover Street
Brooklyn
NY 11231**

Principal: Vanda Belusic-Vollor

Dates of review: February 25-26, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Cheryl Baker

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

South Brooklyn Community High School is a high school with 169 students from grade 10 through grade 12. The school population comprises 21% Black, 72% Hispanic, 5% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes no English language learners and 6% special education students. Boys account for 57% of the students enrolled and girls account for 43%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 72.3%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 65% eligibility.

The school is partnered with Good Shepherd Services and is a transfer school for students who are over-age and under-credited, have previously dropped out of school and who may have family responsibilities. Leadership of the school is shared between the principal and the Division Director of Good Shepherd Services. The program is non-traditional in that students are enrolled throughout the calendar year and may graduate when they have met their credit requirements at the end of any of the four instructional sessions. The program accommodates accelerated credit accrual allowing students to earn up to eighteen credits during the academic year and an additional six during the summer.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal effectively communicates a clear philosophy for the school and its approach to educating and nurturing its students.
- Shared leadership between the school and its partner social service agency is collegial, collaborative and highly effective in prompting the school's mission.
- The school's unique commitment to integrating youth development is exemplified by the highly supportive relationships among students and their counselors.
- Clear expectations for the delivery of instruction underpin accountability measures and differentiated supervision of staff.
- Teacher-developed benchmark assessments effectively inform progress monitoring of students, classrooms and subjects.
- The school understands its students well and tailors instructional programming, social supports and career planning accordingly.
- Professional development structures are ample and varied, providing for greater individualization to meet teacher's needs.
- Advocate counselors keep students, and their parents, apprised of student achievement and areas for improvement as they monitor student's progress.
- Procedures are well defined, understood and reinforced by all staff resulting in a school that runs smoothly and efficiently.
- The analysis of student achievement data results in especially sharp understandings of student progress and the school's performance compared to similar schools.

What the school needs to improve

- Strengthen planning practices by routinely developing action plans with suitable timelines by which to measure incremental progress towards goals.
- Strengthen academic interventions to extend and deepen support for students in math as well as English language arts, especially for those most at risk.
- Expand periodic assessment practices and tools to provide greater diagnostic information about students' learning in, at least, English language arts and math.
- Continue to streamline databases and increase teachers' access to these to broaden their understanding of student's progress and areas of need.
- Provide training to assist teachers in using this data to differentiate instruction bases on student's discrete learning needs.
- Continue to explore all possible mechanism to increase daily student attendance at school and in classes.

Part 3: Main Findings

Progress made since the last review

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

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

South Brooklyn Community High School is unique in its highly collaborative shared leadership for providing a setting in which previously unsuccessful students can flourish. Many do. The extensive support provided by advocate counselors, who work in concert with teachers, is highly effective in building confidence and providing direction for students. However, attendance is still not as high as the school would like. The academic program is carefully designed to meet the needs of students and appropriate adjustments to the typical high school structure encourage and enable efficient and effective learning. Students and their families are engaged in monitoring their progress and appreciate the efforts that teachers, counselors and administrators make on their behalf. The instructional program is geared to student needs and also provides enrichment as well as effective support for future planning. Teaching is generally engaging but not highly differentiated. The school is working to merge its databases and develop more fully its periodic and diagnostic assessment program to provide more information for teachers' planning. This is the current focus of the inquiry team. The school places a strong emphasis on developing students' critical thinking skills and instruction is expected to support this. In response to the last Quality Review, the school has strengthened its approach to professional development so that teachers share in supporting one another's growth through a good range of professional development and supervisory activities. All adults share responsibility for ensuring that the school runs smoothly and supports learning. As well, there is broad collaboration on developing and monitoring school goals that are well understood by all constituencies. Monitoring is regular but is not always supported by timelines and action steps.

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 very good practices with respect to gathering data on students when they enter the school. This gives a clear picture of students' academic and personal needs, and serves as the foundation for home and school relations and informs the work of, especially, advocate counselors. Further, bi-weekly benchmark examinations serve as incremental measures of student progress towards course goals and learning targets. This data as well as information on attendance, credit accrual, and Regents, course,

period and class pass rates contribute to the routine updating of progress of students, classes and subjects. The school and its partner agency collect and store information in multiple databases. Currently, efforts are underway to merge these sources of information so as to create a streamlined and accessible source of data for teachers so that they can plan instruction with even greater precision.

The school's small size and its highly personalized culture lead to very good understandings of the student body by administrators, counselors and teachers. The recent disaggregation of student performance data by ethnicity and gender confirmed anecdotal data regarding these groups progress. In a context where all students are deemed to be at some risk based on their personal academic and social histories, the small numbers of special education students are not categorized as a separate group and their progress is not monitored separately. The progress of the school as a whole is analyzed deeply with respect to other transfer schools with similar entrance criteria. Comparisons reveal that students make very good progress in credit accumulation and Regents pass rates after coming to the school. Graduation rates are increasing and dropout rates are going down. The school has been recognized as a successful model for educating over-age and under-credited students by the state and in the press.

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.

Collaborative planning and decision-making are well-embedded practices. A variety of venues such as retreats, school team meetings, agency team meetings, shared management meetings and meetings with a core group of founders and planners contribute to the very clear understanding of the overall school philosophy and mission and the annual goals that have been identified to move student achievement forward. The school community is clearly focused on goals for addressing the anomaly of high credit accrual and low Regents pass rates, increasing student attendance and increasing early identification of potential failures based on benchmark assessments. Measurable goals for achievement have been set but plans and timelines for reaching these goals are not specific. At the class level, teachers set proficiency targets related to unit plans and monitor student progress effectively through regular benchmark testing. Expectations for student achievement are high and despite previous lack of success, students are encouraged to believe in their capacity to succeed. Teachers and counselors constantly address planning for continued education. Counselors assist students in monitoring their own progress by keeping records of all academic, attendance and other pertinent data. They meet with students regularly to discuss this data, address deficits and set goals and targets for improvements. They also communicate with students' families on a frequent basis to provide progress updates, enlist parental support or glean information about possible causes for student's lack of success or poor attendance. Therefore, the flow of information among school, home and students is seamless and effective in supporting academic and social progress. For those most at risk, such as special education students or those who have not passed Regents exams after multiple attempts, specialized classes have been developed and, recently, some staff have been trained to assist struggling readers. Loosely structured extra help opportunities are offered on an as need basis and student attendance is variable. Despite the fact that, overall, student performance in mathematics is not as

strong as in English language arts, specific math academic interventions have not been developed.

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 curricular program is carefully and effectively designed to address students’ needs for credit accrual and Regents preparation so they can earn a high school diploma and move on to higher education or career development efficiently and rapidly. Upon entry, students’ academic and support programs are individualized to address their specific deficits in credits and Regents pass rates as well as their personal needs. Thus, students take the classes that they need and the school also provides good enrichment through electives in the arts, computer technology, Spanish, leadership opportunities and theatre. Significantly, career and future education preparation are integral to the instructional program providing students with internships and personalized guidance for planning their next steps. The school and its partner agency are very effective in utilizing all manner of data to make strategic budgetary, staffing and scheduling decisions. For example, the graduation needs of students directly influence decisions for course schedules and offerings. Research on the personal needs of older students led to the school’s late start time and its commitment to rolling admissions and graduations. Most significant is the funding of six advocate counselors, each with a caseload of twenty-five students, ensuring that students with multiple needs and deficits receive the attention and support they so desperately need. The pervasive culture of caring, respect and support for students is noteworthy. Relations among and between adults and students are very positive and effective in developing academic and personal strength and confidence. Yet, despite this positive environment for learning, extensive outreach, and clear expectations and consequences, low attendance rates remain a persistent challenge. Current yearly attendance averages just over 69%. The school’s instructional program philosophy spells out explicit expectations for developing students’ critical thinking skills within the context of the workshop model and teachers are held accountable, through multiple measures, for making instruction interesting. Generally, it is. While benchmark assessments are regular and used well to gauge student progress towards learning goals, these teacher-made periodic assessments do not provide crisp diagnostic information regarding student’s discrete learning deficits. Therefore, instruction is not as differentiated as it might be. As well, many staff new to the profession are building their instructional repertoires. They are very well supported by their colleagues and especially by two principal interns and a coach and are making good progress towards honing their skills.

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.

Teachers engage in individual goal setting with the principal that, along with observations of instruction and the analysis of student performance, inform personalized

improvements for staff and are linked to the school's instructional expectations. In addition to two formal observations of teaching by administrators, four other observations, often by other teachers, serve to bolster teachers' instructional skills. Other options for differentiated supervision include videotaping and critiquing a colleague's lesson. There are many opportunities for effective collaboration and sharing and staff are encouraged to share leadership such as facilitating the work of small learning communities, mentoring colleagues or serving on the inquiry team. The teaching and counseling staff are very open and reflective and have, at the core of all of their work together, the belief in their unique opportunity to provide a pathway to success for a previously unsuccessful population.

Nowhere is this more evident as in the excellent integration of the youth development model into the academic setting. The seamless merging of the school and its partner social service agency is exemplified by the work that advocate counselors do to skillfully manage individual student's academic, social and personal development while providing necessary contextualization for life after high school. The institution is, literally, a partnership forged to provide necessary opportunities for youth needing to complete their high school education and, from the ground up, it stands as a model for effective collaboration. Further, more than thirty local businesses are actively involved with the Learning to Work component providing internships and career awareness activities.

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 principal and the director of the school's partner agency share a well-defined philosophy and vision for the school that clearly delineates core principals, components of youth development and the incorporation of critical thinking skills. This effectively informs planning, goal setting and pervades the school's operational approach. Progress on six broad areas for improvement is reviewed at the end of each marking period and appropriate interventions and adjustments follow. Bi-annual retreats also provide context for reflection and analysis of the effectiveness of plans and practices, often resulting in adjustments. For instance, when data revealed that steps taken to increase afternoon attendance had been effective, similar practices were put into place to address morning lateness. Teacher's outcomes are reviewed quarterly, based on credit accrual and Regents pass rates. Their progress in meeting their own professional goals is monitored through formal and informal observations and through records of benchmark assessments that provide an on-going picture of their success in moving students to higher levels of attainment. Benchmark assessments feature prominently as the chief means of measuring periodic progress towards academic goals and in this, they are effective. However, they lack diagnostic capacity thus limiting their ability to identify, in some cases, root causes for students' lack of progress. The school has recognized this and has begun to employ specific tools to aid in determining cognitive deficits while it is in the process of developing its own periodic and diagnostic assessment program.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: South Brooklyn Community High 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? NOT SCORED AS THERE ARE NO ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS	*	*	*	*	*
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