



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Joyce Keld Briarwood School

Elementary School 117

**85 - 15 143rd Street
Queens
NY 11435**

Principal: Harvey Katz

Dates of review: February 11 -12, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Barry King

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Joyce Keld Briarwood School is an elementary school with 1125 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 6. The school population comprises 14% Black, 30% Hispanic, 17% White, and 40% Asian and students from other ethnic groups. The student body includes 16% English language learners and 7% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 93.5%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 71% eligibility.

The school has in the past received funding for its role as Magnet School of Theater Arts and Music. The funding is no longer available but the school retains a high priority for the arts in the life of the school.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school's respected leadership has set a very good tone for the school and is effective in promoting student achievement and personal skills.
- Good levels of mutual trust and respect exist throughout the school.
- Staff expertise builds well through the well-targeted programs of professional development.
- The staff have good opportunities to collaborate in planning and they learn a great deal from each other.
- The school collects valuable data from a wide range of sources on student progress, and organizes it well
- Staff are now using the results of periodic assessments well to set short-term learning goals for students and to align instruction to meet them.
- Classrooms are well-organized and calm learning environments, where students are actively engaged in their learning.
- The core curriculum is well organized and enriched through a variety of programs, including the arts, which are much appreciated by students.
- Staff monitor their work carefully and are continuously looking for ways in which they can improve their practice.
- The school communicates well with parents, who are very supportive of it.

What the school needs to improve

- Set longer-term goals for students, classes, grades and the school as a whole, so that progress towards them can be accurately measured
- Ensure relevant stakeholders are aware of longer-term goals..
- Build on the improving classroom strategies for differentiating instruction and using information technology.
- Develop stronger contacts with similar schools to share good practice.

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 principal and his senior colleagues have continued to lead the school well over the past year. They have given priority to the areas for improvement in the previous Quality Review and made good progress in all of them. This is particularly true of the curriculum and instruction for English language learners, where extra resources were committed and achievement has improved. This group has also become a well-judged focus for the school's inquiry team.

The school's leaders cultivate levels of trust and respect throughout the school, so that staff can review the effectiveness of their work in a constructive climate. This contributes to the effectiveness of their professional development programs, which are well targeted to meet the priorities of the school. Staff also support each other well through the frequent opportunities to collaborate with one another. The school has taken important strides in the gathering and use of data in recent months. The teachers' good understanding of student progress enables them to set clear short-term learning goals, although longer-term measurable goals are not set for all students. Staff are increasingly competent in using data to differentiate classroom instruction, but there is still some way to go to match work consistently to student need. The school is constantly scanning the horizon to see how well it is performing in relation to similar schools, although it has not made close enough contacts with them to share good practice. The school's calm and well-organized learning environment enables students to engage well in classroom instruction. The curriculum is well planned and students enjoy the extensive opportunities in the arts. The school has improved student access to computers, which they enjoy using, and recognizes that the amount of hardware is currently limited. The principal has succeeded in his vision of making the school the center of its community and parents feel well connected with their children's education.

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 has significantly improved the extent and quality of the data it collects about its students since the previous Quality Review. It has enthusiastically embraced the Acuity and Scantron testing systems for grades 3 through 6. Class teachers in these grades now have a more detailed knowledge of the progress of each student, which informs their planning of instruction. In the younger grades, a close watch is kept on

student progress through other forms of testing, such as ECLAS-2 and the tests that form part of the Foundations program. In all grades, teachers observe their students closely in class and keep running records.

The administration collates data so that it has a good overview of the progress of each student, class and grade. The data is supplemented for certain groups, such as special education students, who are also tested using the Wilson reading program. The administration has kept a particularly close eye on the progress of English language learners, as the provision for these students was a cause of concern noted in the previous review. The administration has a good grasp of the school's year-on-year performance and how well different groups are performing in relation to each other, although it does not yet display this information in accessible formats for others to see. It is keenly aware of how well the school performs in relation to similar schools, but does not make enough contact with them to compare the effectiveness of their programs and share good practice. The staff have been well supported in handling the new data systems and in establishing data binders in their rooms. The result is that teachers have become more confident data handlers, as seen in their well-developed approaches to using data to set goals and align instruction.

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.

The school's high expectations are well known to all stakeholders. They have been instrumental in its success in promoting student achievement and personal growth. During the past year, staff have learned to use data well in the setting of short-term learning goals. They use the outcomes from the periodic assessments to identify a student's strengths in English language arts and math, and the skills in these subjects that the student needs to improve. Both the strengths and the learning targets are communicated effectively to students on sheets that they have by their desks. The next steps in learning are also reinforced by the pinning of rubrics on walls next to work done by students, so that they can see exactly what they need to do to move up a level. The school has had a clear goal to improve the achievement of English language learners and its focused attention on this group has resulted in improved outcomes.

The school's overriding priorities are set out clearly in the Comprehensive Education Plan and are generally understood. The administration is also determined to achieve the overall goal set for it in the 2007 Progress Report. The school's leaders have not yet worked through exactly what this means in terms of improvements in achievement for the school as a whole and for each class and grade, and then communicated its intentions to the school community. Individual students are clear that the school wants them to "get our grades higher", as one said, but they are not given measurable, personalized longer-term goals to aim at. The exceptions are the special education students, who have precise goals in their individual education plans. A major strength of the school is its open lines of communication to parents. They are fulsome in their praise of how well informed they are about their child's progress and the responsiveness of all staff to any queries. The principal models this open approach, and parents recognize that "he makes the time" to speak to them. The school is also careful to seek the views of parents, through the round of frequent meetings and surveys.

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.

Good relationships and high levels of trust and respect exist at all levels in the school. This is seen in the interaction of staff, the way that students treat each other and the welcome given to parents. These factors have been important in creating a school environment that is well kept and calm. Students feel safe in the school, and eager to learn. The staff are developing styles of learning that increasingly engage the students. This is well demonstrated by the “accountable talk” sessions where students discuss books they are reading, talking thoughtfully and listening carefully to others.

The core curriculum is well organized and scheduled in a way that allows teachers professional freedom in implementing instruction while making clear to them the framework within which they must plan. The school’s arts programs run like a rich seam through its life and work. Teachers certified in art and music provide instruction, the school mounts an annual theater production, professional artists visit the school and students can learn photography after school. Both students and parents much appreciate this breadth of the arts curriculum.

The staff have worked hard to improve the differentiation of instruction throughout the school. In addition to longer-standing approaches, such as leveling the reading, conferencing and “pull outs”, teachers are now beginning to use the data from periodic assessments to group students and provide different levels of work. As one said, “Acuity is helping me to see my students’ weaknesses, and it’s helping me to plan my lessons.” This is an important breakthrough in the school, but is an approach that is not yet developed far enough, as shown by higher achieving students who say that they often finish early and are not set more challenging work to do.

The school has acted well on the recommendation in the last Quality Review to use more computers in classrooms, and rooms now usually have two machines that are carefully scheduled for student use. Students enjoy working on them but the school recognizes that the stock of hardware is still low, in terms of computers and smart boards. Budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions are aligned well to the school’s priorities. An example of this was the decision last year to appoint two extra teachers for English language learners, which has improved the teacher/student ratio for this group of learners and led to gains in their achievement. The robust procedures for securing student attendance have proved their worth, with a notable increase in percentages over the past two years.

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 administration has a high visibility around the school, which demonstrates to all stakeholders the commitment of the school leaders to the work and life of the students. The senior team members collaborate with each other very well, which sets the tone for the whole school. Staff have good opportunities for meeting with, and learning from,

each other, and demonstrate a high level of professional commitment to improving the learning of their students. They have access to a wide range of well-targeted professional development that has, for example, built the capacity of staff well in the gathering and use of data to differentiate instruction. The school's good contacts with outside organizations, such as the Jamaica Center for Arts and Learning and St John's University, enrich the curriculum and provide good support for teachers in continuing to develop their skills.

The administration conducts formal classroom observations in accordance with agreed procedures and records these well. In addition to this, they are out and about in classrooms on a daily basis to observe teaching and offer support to teachers. As one assistant principal justifiably commented, "We really know what's going on in classrooms." A considerable achievement for this large school is the extent to which individual students are well known to staff. The "family feel" is well demonstrated by the principal, whose priority is to make contact with his students on a daily basis. The school thus provides good support for students, who feel they can readily seek help from an adult if they are troubled, despite the fact that the school has only one guidance counselor. The extent of the shared values in the school is shown by the way in which it runs smoothly, with students learning to exercise self-discipline and to be considerate to others. The very low number of suspensions is evidence of the success of the school in educating its students to become responsible citizens.

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 school has a well-developed culture of reflecting on its work and striving to improve it. This was clearly demonstrated in a routine grade 4 meeting where teachers were discussing with each other possible improvements in the way they teach students to tell the time. At a more strategic level, the school's priorities in the 2006/07 Comprehensive Education Plan were well chosen and have been acted upon effectively.

The school has good arrangements for gathering ongoing data about how well the students, and its plans for them, are performing. It is ever ready to make changes when the need arises, as when it switched its grouping arrangements for readers in April 2007. The staff are increasingly adept at setting short-term learning goals for individual students on the basis of data from periodic assessments, and flexibly grouping them to assist their instruction. The school does not yet have a system of setting precise, longer-term goals for all students against which their progress can be measured and instructional plans realigned as necessary, except for special education students.

The principal's vision for the school has been key to its successful development over the past five years. His desire to "keep the school moving up" in terms of achievement while providing an arts-rich curriculum has guided the school's progress. These ambitions are widely shared, as is his goal to make the school a centre of the community, something the parents have greatly appreciated.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Joyce Keld Briarwood 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