



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

The Walter J. Damrosch Day Treatment Center

Elementary High School 186

750 Jennings Street

Bronx

New York 10459

Principal: Ava C. Kaplan

Dates of review: January 28-29, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Ronnie Young

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Walter J. Damrosch Day Treatment Center is an elementary-high school with 367 students from kindergarten through grade 12. The school population comprises 38% Black, 58% Hispanic, 2.1% White, 1.4% Asian and 0.5% Native American students. The student body includes 6.5% English language learners and 98% special education students. Boys account for 76% of the students enrolled and girls account for 24%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 84.1%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 77% eligibility.

It is a District 75 school situated on three different sites in the Bronx and Manhattan. The students, who range in age from almost five to 18, present with a variety of conditions including depression, anxiety, oppositional defiant disorder, conduct disorder, bipolar disorder, attention deficit disorder, school phobia, mental retardation and learning disabilities. Half of the students follow standardized assessment programs and half follow alternate assessment.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal, ably assisted by the assistant principals, provides strong leadership for a team of highly committed staff.
- Staff have excellent knowledge of students' individual needs and progress which has led to well-established goal-setting for students.
- The whole school works collaboratively and democratically, involving large teams of teachers, support staff and related service providers.
- Excellent support from clinicians, therapists and guidance counselors is interwoven into students' programs.
- The school is very well organized, with clear procedures and routines throughout.
- The students show very high levels of good behavior and there is a high level of respect, trust and regard between them and the school staff.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced, including provision for physical well-being and the arts.
- The atmosphere across the school is happy, optimistic and vibrant with students showing eagerness to learn.
- The emphasis on social, life and communication skills equips students very well for life after this school.
- Staff are flexible and quick to change plans or practices as necessary

What the school needs to improve

- Break down data by ethnicity and gender to ascertain possible trends in progress and performance.
- Define goals for teachers with formal, measurable timelines and benchmarks to enable their performance to be monitored and evaluated.
- Simplify and articulate the school vision so it becomes the main driving force 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 principal, ably assisted by her administration team, provides strong leadership for a school with a wide age range, which serves students with many disparate conditions. The staff are highly committed and devoted to fulfilling the potential of all its students. Individualizing the school experience for each student is the driving force behind all its activities, so each can work at their own level and pace and in their optimum way. The staff go out of their way to do whatever is needed to raise student self-esteem, improve behavior and give the student a voice. They use data routinely to monitor student performance, devise groupings and plan instruction. However, the school's analysis does not include a breakdown of data by ethnicity or gender. In class, students are able to work according to their individual needs because there is a plethora of clinical and support staff who work in tandem with teachers to provide a holistic, positive environment. Students work according to their own goals which they help to set and monitor. Achievement is rewarded both tangibly, in the form of points that can be exchanged at a school store for real goods, and by celebrations of targets met in the form of charts, graphs and wall displays. The curriculum has been carefully chosen to give a balance between academic rigor, appreciation of the arts and care for physical well-being. The school gives students opportunities to excel in ways that are not just academic, and this boosts self-esteem which in turn improves behavior. The inquiry team is currently focusing on fifth graders needing to increase their reading fluency and writing stamina. The school has made good progress since the last review. It has integrated subject content by introducing journals and working thematically where possible, introduced collaboration with the introduction of math and science labs and addressed efforts to increase student attendance by listing good attenders in parents' newsletters. It has also introduced weekly meetings with assistant principals and increased communications with parents. The atmosphere across the school is happy, optimistic and vibrant with students demonstrating high levels of enthusiasm for learning. However, the school's vision is vague and not shared by all members of the school community, and goals for teachers are not given as much priority as goals for students.

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 collects and uses a large quantity of data on all of its students. Formal assessments include those from standardized examinations as well as reports from Scantron, Acuity and Gains. Data is broken down for each individual student and the data is used to organize classes carefully, taking into account a student's individual education plan (IEP) requirements, their achievement level and their grade, as well as their chemistry with each other and with individual teachers. This means that although staff carefully analyze data from classes and grades, it is less relevant as a comparison tool. Although the school records ethnicity and gender in its data reports it does not presently use that information. A separate girls' class was tried but disliked by the girls. Aside from specific girls' sessions with coaches for grooming and health issues, there is no program specifically for girls. A multicultural day each year aims to address the diversity in the school. However, there is no way of ascertaining whether cultural attitudes to disability have any bearing on relationships with parents or influence on students outside school. The school does track individuals and cohorts year on year and tries to keep groups together for tracking as well as for social reasons. It compares itself with its sister school which has a similar student population and also compares its test results with other Bronx schools. The school has useful practical systems and training for data collection and use, including individual student binders in all classrooms and data folios for alternate assessment students. Professional development is ongoing, usually during lunchtimes or after school, and meetings and common preparation periods always include data as a basis for planning. As ARIS comes online, the school is starting to plan for and work with spreadsheets and computerised data.

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 is one of the main driving forces of the school. All the administration have an open door policy and pride themselves that someone is always available if a staff member needs help or a management decision. The school uses an excellent multi-disciplinary approach; clinicians work with teachers in the classroom and communications about students are non-stop. Social workers, psychologists and the guidance counselor meet families and their children because they recognize that what happens at home is interwoven with what happens at school. Coaches work continually with teachers and student collaboration is encouraged, with older students working with younger ones as classroom assistants. This teaches them responsibility and raises their self-esteem. Goal setting for behavior and academic progress is routine in the school. Students' long- and short-term goals are produced in conjunction with academic and clinical staff and displayed in each classroom and hallway. As a result, all students know their personal goals well. These goals are shared with parents, as are strategies for reaching them, and they are self-monitored by the students. Relationships with

parents are good because communication between the school and parents is frequent and two-way. The school sends monthly newsletters and reports to parents and parents reply with information on students. Parents are invited in to IEP meetings and frequent parent-teacher meetings. Staff make themselves available to parents for the last 30 minutes of the school day. Achievement records are sent home either daily or weekly. The number of parents who are actively involved in their children's education has risen to about 75%, due in part to the efforts of the bilingual parent coordinator. The school runs monthly workshops for parents on such topics as pharmaceuticals and the curriculum. These have helped educate parents on how to help their children at home, as well as bring the parents into the school and maintain relationships with the staff. The school focuses especially on those students who are on the cusp of a grade or those who are delayed academically. Academic intervention services staff meet each morning and work with those students deemed in greatest need of help. A retired teacher comes in weekly to carry out 1:1 tuition in literacy. As a result, student progress is improving.

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 school has carefully chosen its core curriculum because it is suitable for the students and produces meaningful data. Staff are totally accountable for the learning of their students, and have developed expertise in tailoring the materials and lessons to individual need. The school has also broadened and enriched its curriculum. For example, an artist in residence works in classrooms integrating art, and the school has just opened an art gallery featuring various artistic exhibits from across the school. Music, cookery and computing are also in the curriculum. The school is involved in the United Nations Virtual Program and has just won the District debating competition. The program of physical education includes basketball and gym. This extensive range of activities allows students to excel in many non-academic ways.

Teachers routinely differentiate work for students, based on data. Classes usually have several activities going on and students work in groups, pairs or individually, depending on the nature of the task. Sometimes students are all doing the same work but in different ways. There are computers in most classrooms and students work individually on programs such as Achieve 3000. This has enabled students to work at their own levels and achieve their individual targets. Paraprofessionals and clinicians work with individuals or groups in the classrooms to support students or work on specific skills, such as speech or communication. Respect is paramount and staff and students show high levels of mutual regard and trust. Staff model good communication skills with non-verbal clues and tone of voice. By emphasizing and modeling appropriate relationships they foster good attitudes between students and staff. Staff are encouraged by the principal to "leave your egos at the door – we want the students to win". This has helped raise students' self-esteem, which in turn has led to good behavior. As routine and rituals are important for this population of students, staff ensure that they apply school rules consistently and rigorously.

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.

Extensive support from guidance counselors, therapists and psychologists is completely interwoven into students' programs, whether in the classroom or in individual or group sessions. This supports students very effectively and improves both behavior and achievement. Clinicians work with whole families if necessary to help with student attendance and resolve out of school issues. Students on alternate assessment have regular play and drama therapy which assists their communication skills as well as addressing emotional issues. There is a well-trained and expert crisis team always on call should there be a behavior or emotional incident which disrupts the smooth running of the school. Skilled therapists and guidance counselors are responsible for an excellent social, life and communications skills program which equips students very well for life in, out of and after school. The principal and assistant principals conduct frequent lesson observations and walkthroughs, including classrooms, the cafeteria and school buses, always with helpful feedback. Observers look especially for evidence of differentiation, appropriacy, multisensory experiences and integrated English language arts and math so student experience always links to need. Intervisitation is encouraged and welcomed by staff, whose instruction benefits from learning successful strategies from other teachers when time allows. New teachers are carefully selected and mentored. All new teachers are buddied with an experienced teacher and take part in a useful summer program before they start, to induct them into the school and its population.

The school is extremely well organized, with very clear rules. Because the rules and sanctions are clearly laid out in displays around the building, behavior management is straightforward and consistent. The school's reward system for good behavior, based on the award of points which can be spent at the college store, has been a good incentive for students. It has appealed to the competitive nature of the students, led to very high levels of student self-responsibility and increased their sense of achievement.

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 is expert at working with IEPs and other goal-oriented paperwork as well as diagnostic and other assessments, so it routinely uses measurable, interim goals in its planning for students. Clinical sessions are often conducted around targets based around, "Where are you now?" "Where do you want to be?" or "How do you get there?" The staff keep promotional tracking logs, based on achievement of goals, and this has helped almost all students be promoted each year. Teachers are very flexible and adept at changing plans and practices quickly if necessary. According to the principal, the school "is a work in progress; we try, evaluate, modify then try again. We are always trying to get our plans right". Goals for teachers, other than pacing calendars, are not written down, although they are discussed at pre- and post-observation meetings. This has made monitoring and evaluation of staff goals difficult and unsystematic. All members of the school community are able to communicate a school vision, but it is not

the same one. The sentiment is the same, but the direction vague, detracting from the mission of the school, which is to get as many students as possible into less restricted environments.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: The Walter J. Damrosch Treatment 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