

Quality Review Report 2008-2009

Lillian L. Rashkis School

High School 371

**355 37 Street
Brooklyn
NY 11232**

Principal: Mary Ann Andrews

Dates of review: March 16 - 18, 2009

Lead Reviewer: Corinne Brown

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Lillian L. Rashkis School 371 is a school with 291 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 58% Black, 28% Hispanic, 10% White, 3% American Indian students and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 3% English language learners and 100% special education students. Boys account for 80% of the students enrolled and girls account for 20%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 69.1%. The school is not in receipt of Title 1 funding.

This District 75 special education school is located in Sunset Park, Brooklyn. Approximately half of all students follow alternate assessment programs, with half following standardized assessment courses. The majority of alternate assessment students are learning disabled and attend work sites full time. There are three self-contained classes in the school's adjacent annex for students with autism. Overage and under-credited students following standardized assessment programs have two worksites, and school phobic students are served at the off-site in Telecommunications High School. Class staff ratios across sites reflect students' needs, at 9:1:3 (students to teacher to paraprofessional), 6:1:1, 8:1:1 and 12:1:1.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

From the front office to the principal, respectful interpersonal relationships reflect the nurturing environment at the Lillian L. Rashkis School. The adults' knowledge of individual students and care for their wellbeing is a common, unifying feature across the school's diverse student populations. One teacher summarized this, saying, "Even though the students are challenging, we all love them dearly." As a result, students flourish, developing or regaining their self-belief and making independent choices about their futures. School leaders are ever mindful of the different service categories within the student population and of their needs. Accordingly, assessment tools vary. Formative and summative data collection and analysis provide an ongoing picture of individual and group performance and of progress, patterns and trends. Individual education plan goals inform all decision-making, so lead rightly to the Comprehensive Educational Plan goals and initiatives to raise student outcomes. While all goals are realistic and rooted in data, some lack the requisite detail to ensure robust interim monitoring. In addition, although the school synthesizes and analyzes information about several subject areas for each population, it does not do this for all subjects to gain a comprehensive overview of all aspects of school performance. Wide-ranging professional development clearly relates to service category needs. However, teachers do not have individual professional growth plans, linked to identified needs, to hone their skills. As a result, leaders do not formally evaluate the impact of professional development on instructional practice and student outcomes.

Students are fully involved in setting goals at their individual education plan conference. Although leaders and teachers modify the curriculum in line with students' needs and differentiate instruction, not all lessons sufficiently extend student learning. Extensive partnerships with external organizations enrich the curriculum and students' experiences. Strong personal support from guidance and other staff, together with clear expectations and boundaries, mean that students become independent and make positive choices. As one said, "The school helps you do what you gotta do."

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Through its analysis of data, the school understands individual and group performance for different student populations, and knows its strengths and areas for continued development in working to realize its vision to facilitate students' independence as contributing citizens.
- Leaders and staff set realistic goals in several subject areas based on data, including life skills, and rightly involve students in establishing their individual education plan goals and short-term objectives.
- Focused initiatives with explicit expectations, clear boundaries and flexible support regarding attendance, behavior and academic performance show promising results as students take responsibility for their actions.
- Students profit from a flexible curriculum, referencing real-life skills and tailored to their needs, including useful guidance, support services and partnerships, so are empowered and progress socially, emotionally and academically.
- The strength of positive interpersonal relationships, in which all members of the community are valued and respected, underpins all areas of the school's work, so that students regain self-belief and turn their lives around.
- Teachers and paraprofessionals are dedicated, reflective and mutually supportive, seeking to improve student outcomes by honing their skills through engaging in the varied professional development opportunities available.

What the school needs to improve

- Secure precise detail of measurability in all goals across the school to enable robust interim monitoring of progress toward goals.
- Extend goal setting and collection of assessment data to all subject areas relevant to the different student populations to gain a comprehensive overview of students' learning and inform strategic action planning.
- Ensure that all students, including higher achievers, extend their learning at their level through active opportunities to take ownership of their learning, written feedback on their work that details next steps for improvement and effective questioning that involves all students.
- Formulate individual teacher professional growth plans in collaborative discussion based on data, including insightful lesson observations focused on agreed standards, to enable analysis of the impact of professional development on instruction and student outcomes.

Part 3: Main Findings

How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do and to monitor the student's progress over time.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

Because there are three distinct student populations under the school's umbrella, teachers rightly gather data routinely from formative and summative assessment relevant to their service category. For the autistic students, the Brigance inventory provides some regular feedback about life skills acquisition. The *Becker Work Adjustment Profiles* offer insight into alternate assessment students' academic and behavioral skills, with the useful *Careerscope* tool guiding vocational choices. Standardized assessment students follow high school courses, so Regents tests and Regents Competency Tests, along with information from tools such as Acuity and Scantron, provide suitable information for these students. Through regular collection and analysis of all such data, leaders maintain an ongoing picture of students' performance and progress, which they share with staff, although this does not yet extend to all subjects. The administration rightly interrogates all such information and cross-references by class, gender, cohort, English language learner and ethnicity subgroups to note anomalies and trends over time. Leaders also compare school performance against similar populations within other schools and the District overall, particularly in attendance, behavior and main academic areas. In this way, leaders note no marked differences between different ethnic subgroups, and that the service category is the main factor that affects performance.

Families receive regular formal information regarding individual performance, including a report for summer school. The school frequently disseminates information useful to parents and students through varied means including personal calls, progress reports, transcripts and targeted letters. The diploma worksheet valuably shows students a clear picture of what they have achieved and what they still require to graduate successfully. Worksite student evaluation sheets mean that students receive regular feedback on their attitudes and performance in the vocational setting. Regular review of all relevant data fully involves the student, so includes academic review conferences with teachers. Teachers maintain a watchful eye on the individual education plan goals alongside students, with review at least every three months, or more frequently if indicated. In this way, the school maintains a suitable overview at all levels. In the quest to improve, leaders recognize the value of analyzing data about all subjects and harnessing additional tools to give precise information on particular service category skills development.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each student's learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

Teachers collaborate in cohort meetings to set goals for subjects particular to the service category. In this way, the career development occupational skills program encompasses activities of daily living, communication and math competencies as well as social and behavioral skills for autistic students. For other student groups, teachers set goals relating to academic subjects such as English language arts, math and social studies. Leaders and teachers do not formally set goals for subjects such as the arts and physical education, although they do assess aspects of student progress within these areas. Individual education plan goals detail steps or short-term objectives to achieve the long-term goals, formulated with students and parents. Regular meetings at all levels of the school, whether teacher and student, school leadership team or cohort teachers, maintain focus on the achievement of goals. Pacing calendars highlight required assessment and evaluation intervals.

The school leadership team devises the Comprehensive Educational Plan through reviewing all pertinent data, including the Learning Environment Survey and Quality Review. These school goals are rightly relevant to the needs of service categories and current priorities. Parents and students are integrally involved in school and individual goal setting as the school develops a sense of personal responsibility among students. In this way, students have ownership for their actions and regain control of their lives. Leaders hold all constituents accountable for playing their part in achieving school and individual goals. "Got goals?", painted large on the main office door, focuses everyone on why they are there. Bulletin boards reinforce goals, highlight success and promote incentives. The monthly reward for 100% attendance resulted in 68 students at the main site receiving lottery tickets for a bicycle in February, which is a large proportion of students. Teachers' and students' conversations revolve around attendance and behavior tracking in the positive, encouraging classroom environment. *Power of Choice* positive behavior charts displayed in every room act as motivational reinforcers. Students at all sites proudly relate the changes they have made in their lives, to start afresh in the belief they can achieve.

Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students' learning goals.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

Teachers and leaders work carefully together to tailor the curriculum to service category requirements. As the school has expanded its autistic population and so begun a program for three self-contained classes, functional life skills underpin all students' learning. Teachers expose alternate assessment students to structured, integrated opportunities to develop communication, math and other necessary skills, whether in the classroom or at the worksite. Students who have experienced school phobia gently reintegrate into general education inclusion classes, or follow similar high school courses, including at advanced placement level, geared to the individual's emotional and academic needs. The flexibility of programming for such students is crucial to their academic and personal success. The school, in all curricular and interpersonal areas, is rightly responsive to the individual student's needs. Making meaningful connections to real life in lessons motivates students, as they see relevance to their own lives. Extended day opportunities, residencies, partnerships and practical learning opportunities, such as Lillian's Bistro and Lillian's Store, enrich the students' experience and validate their contribution to the school community. In this way, the administration carefully supports a broad curricular experience for all students, suitable for their service

category requirements. Leaders provide communication devices, technology, programs such as *Writer's Express* and staffing to ensure a safe environment for all.

Although teachers differentiate lessons with sensitivity to student's needs, not all lessons sufficiently extend all students' learning, including higher achievers. Many lessons miss opportunities to engage students in active participation. Questioning does not consistently involve all students in critical thinking, and written feedback on students' work often lacks detail regarding next steps for improvement.

However, the positive interpersonal relationships between all staff and students, showing respect and valuing the individual, mean that students feel comfortable to trust again, believe in themselves and take responsibility for effecting positive change in their lives. The clear boundaries, caring structures and nurturing personnel result in many students successfully moving to less restrictive environments and graduating.

Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school's goals for accelerating student learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school provides teachers with suitable opportunities to attend formal and informal professional development relevant to their students' needs. Because of the new program for autistic students, teachers now successfully use the Picture Exchange Communication Symbols to aid communication within their classrooms. This results from specific training and a District coach's weekly support. During the summer, teachers from the Telecommunications High School off-site take part in general education or special education training, according to the specialist subject or emotional requirements of their students. Teachers, paraprofessionals and all staff collegially support each other, to form a reflective, caring professional community. This embraces new teachers warmly, supplementing their formal mentoring support. The school introduced the *Professional Teaching Standards* framework earlier this academic year, which lesson observations now reference. However, teachers have not yet formalized professional growth plans in discussion with administration, based on a rigorous lesson observation format and other pertinent data. Leaders work to empower teachers and encourage inter-visitations, committee and inquiry team involvement. The fruitful work from last year's inquiry team effectively informed the use of writing rubrics across the school. All grade 9 and grade 10 teachers are drilling down into data this year as part of the expanded team's work to focus on particular skill development. In parallel, a second team is similarly targeting requesting skills in specific situations for the autistic population. Both teams' relevant work shows promise and potential for generalization to other populations, grades and situations.

Leaders and staff skillfully harness related service providers, other support services and partnerships to support students' notable academic, personal and social progress. The coordination with Telecommunications High School results in successful student outcomes. Guidance counselors carefully advocate for students. A student commented, "Guidance counselors, teachers and therapists all help you with family problems." Individual pupil personal team meetings rightly involve parents and so families benefit from coordinated support that includes community health organizations. Extensive partnerships result in worksite, curricular, personal and social development opportunities through organizations such as Vocational Education Services for Individuals with Disabilities, Camp Vacamas, Plymouth Church and Rush Philanthropic Galleries. The

work of the New York Cares partnership enlivens hallways, doors and walls with colorful, motivational murals and slogans.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school works to fulfill its mission to enable students to realize their potential, become independent and articulate to suitable future opportunities, through ongoing reflection, evaluation and adjustment. In this way, teachers and leaders make ongoing and strategic decisions to adjust programs or modify the curriculum, including through bi-monthly review of all data. Accordingly, the administration secured worksites for two classes of overage and under-credited students with emotional difficulties. This enabled these students to achieve success and validation from the wider community. Sensitive flexibility in programming for all students means that, for example, students benefit from additional tutoring or paraprofessional support. However, because some goals lack specificity in interim monitoring detail, formal monitoring of goals is not robust. Although the administration notes the impact of professional development on teachers' instructional practice, they do not formally evaluate the impact of professional development on teacher growth and student outcomes.

Leaders share a clear vision with the community to nurture each student toward independence. Through regular analysis of relevant data, the administration understands the broad picture of individual and group performance and progress. It recognizes school strengths and implements strategies to address perceived deficiencies. In this way, incentives to improve attendance including breakfast with administrators show promising results. For this transient student population, many with a history of poor attendance, the 3% increase in attendance overall in the last two years, marks a pleasing improvement. Leaders have clear plans to refine, extend and carry the school's work forward, always with student outcomes in mind. Those who know the school recognize the individual successes it enables. One grandparent rightly summarized this, saying, "They don't give up on them. The school makes everyone feel they're someone." A student gratefully reflected, "The school makes you believe it can work; they make you feel responsible."

School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

School name: The Lillian L. Rashkis School	△	▷	✓	+
Overall QR Score			X	
Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do, and to monitor the student’s progress over time.				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty regularly...</i>	△	▷	✓	+
1.1 collect and analyze actionable information, including assessment results and attendance data, to provide a complete view of the learning outcomes and needs of individual students and groupings of students?			X	
1.2 focus analysis on the learning outcomes and needs of all sub-groups of students?			X	
1.3 engage in an open exchange of information with students and families about students’ learning needs and outcomes, including assessment results and attendance data?			X	
1.4 design or adapt tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance, identify trends and inform instructional and organizational decisions, and to enable students and their families to assess and track each student’s progress?			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 student’s learning.				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty...</i>	△	▷	✓	+
2.1 use collaborative and data-informed processes to set measurable, actionable and differentiated learning goals in core subjects for individual students and groupings of students and develop differentiated plans and timeframes for reaching these goals?			X	
2.2 use collaborative and data-informed processes to develop the school’s Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP)?			X	
2.3 ensure that the achievement of learning goals, and the implementation of plans and timeframes for reaching these goals, is the central focus of school leaders, faculty, students and families?			X	
2.4 communicate high expectations to all students and families, and involve students in developing their learning goals and plans and in taking their next learning steps?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2			X	

DEFINITIONS

“**Analyze**” or “**analysis**” includes, but is not limited to, comparisons of:

- the current and past outcomes of . . . individual students, administrative groupings and sub-groups of students and the school itself in core subjects;
- the outcomes of different classrooms and sub-groups in the same grades and core subjects; and
- the school’s Progress Report and other outcomes to those of peer/other schools

“**Assessment results**” include student outcomes on summative assessments (e.g., state ELA, math, science and social studies tests, NYSESLAT, Regents Exams, and Performance Based Assessment Tasks) and formative assessments aligned to the school’s curriculum (including Periodic, DYO, and teacher-developed Classroom Assessments).

“**Core subjects**” are ELA, math, science, social studies/history, the arts, foreign language, and physical education/health.

“**Data-informed processes**” include analysis of Progress Report, Quality Review, Learning Environment Survey, Inquiry Team findings, assessment results and attendance data

“**Groupings of students**” include classrooms, grade levels and high school cohorts.

“**Organizational decisions or strategies**” refer to a school’s use of budget and resources, staffing, planning, scheduling, grade structure, departments and teacher teams and other aspects of the school’s structure and organization that can affect student outcomes.

“**Sub-groups of students**” include special education students, English Language Learners, the other NCLB sub-groups, boys, girls, and other groups significant to the school.

Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students’ learning goals.

<i>To what extent do ...</i>	△	➤	✓	+
3.1 school leaders and faculty deliver challenging and engaging curricula in core subjects, including the arts, that are aligned to state standards?			X	
3.2 teachers plan and teach lessons that are differentiated to meet the needs of individual students and student groupings and are designed to enable all students to reach their learning goals?		X		
3.3 school leaders make strategic organizational decisions to support a coherent and rigorous instructional approach that enables students to reach their learning goals?			X	
3.4 school leaders maintain a culture of mutual trust and respect and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				X
Overall score for Quality Statement 3			X	

Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals for accelerating student learning.

<i>To what extent do school leaders...</i>	△	➤	✓	+
4.1 use their own observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of student outcomes to implement an explicit, differentiated strategy to improve each teacher’s instruction, with a special focus on new teachers?		X		
4.2 encourage teachers to take part in Inquiry Teams and other structured professional collaborations (informed by the examination of student work, assessment outcomes and their own peer observations) and share in the instructional leadership of the school with the goal of improved student learning?			X	
4.3 provide professional development that encourages teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve student outcomes?			X	
4.4 utilize youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?				X
Overall score for Quality Statement 4			X	

Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and evaluating each student’s progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.

<i>To what extent do ...</i>	△	➤	✓	+
5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes and its strategies for improving each teacher’s instructional practices include measurable interim goals and suitable time frames for evaluating success and making adjustments during the year?			X	
5.2 school leaders and faculty use interim checkpoints and data to inform lessons, improve curriculum, differentiate instruction and revise student learning plans throughout the year?			X	
5.3 school leaders use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of and modify organizational decisions, structured professional collaborations and teacher improvement strategies?		X		
5.4 school leaders and the school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to support academic, personal and professional growth?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 5			X	

Quality Review Scoring Key

△	Underdeveloped	➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed
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