

Quality Review

Report

2008-2009

**East Brooklyn Congregations High School for Public
Service**

High School 545
1155 DeKalb Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11221

Principal: Barnaby Spring

Dates of review: March 5 - 6, 2009
Lead Reviewer: Geri Taylor-Brown

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

East Brooklyn Congregations High School for Public Service is a high school with 648 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 11% Black, 87% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 11% English language learners and 5% special education students. Boys account for 46% of the students enrolled and girls account for 54%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 82.2%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 82% eligibility.

Overall Evaluation

This school is underdeveloped with proficient features.

This school is a place where students are empowered to do their best in all areas of their development. The recently appointed principal leads the school in conveying his vision of high expectations for all as he closely focuses on student achievement in all endeavors. His collaborative work with the assistant principals has produced a good data collection and examination system, specifically in English language arts, which is used as the foundation for setting school-wide goals. This is a good beginning to the goal-setting process but there is not an established school-wide practice amongst all staff of setting clear and measurable academic goals to ensure clarity on next learning steps for individual students and conveying this information to their parents.

The inquiry team serves as a model to other school stakeholders on the success of cooperative work. Their work is the springboard for other teachers who are now being trained in the usage of Acuity to better examine, analyze and use student data. But the school has not yet moved all staff towards consistently using individual student data in all class lessons.

Teachers are offered a variety of professional development opportunities, some of which are rightly selected based on teacher self-assessment of areas for development. However, this individualization is not sufficient, as there is no clear connection made between improvement of instruction and student learning needs. Coupled with this is the challenge of planning for differentiated instruction. The school is doing well in beginning to offer varied instructional approaches and activities based on data trends. Teachers of various core subjects have begun to group students and offer activities geared to different learning styles but lessons do not consistently contain instruction based on formal or informal student assessment data.

Pupil support personnel work and support nearly every aspect of school life. Counselors, deans and other staff members outreach to students in-person, and to their parents via telephone, email and letters. However, school-wide communications has not yet bridged the gap in multicultural understanding so that all ethnicities feel culturally understood and that is a concern to some school stakeholders.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal has a clear vision for school growth and regularly shares and exemplifies his commitment to improved student outcomes through open and honest reflection on the practices in teaching and learning.
- School leaders communicate high expectations for all school stakeholders by the development of practices and protocols that focus on improving student outcomes as evidenced by increased student attendance.
- The school leaders collect and examine a wide range of student data from varied sources and they utilize this information to set broad school-wide goals.
- The inquiry team works collaboratively and serves as an exemplary motivational model which encourages staff to strive for increased academic rigor in their respective subjects.
- School support personnel as well as excellent working relationships between the school and community-based organizations contribute to the academic and personal success of the students.

What the school needs to improve

- Establish clear and concise approaches to gathering, analyzing and using student data school-wide for whole grade and individual student academic improvement.
- Expand structures that support the development of individualized short- and long-term goal setting for academic and behavioral improvement for each student.
- Ensure that all teachers deliver differentiated instruction to meet the learning needs of individual students and to continue to address overall learning trends throughout the school.
- Extend the individualized professional development plans for teachers that establish clear linkages between improved teacher skills and accelerated student learning.
- Build on the good beginnings to implement systems of regular communications throughout that promotes cross-cultural understanding and keeps families fully informed about their children's progress.

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 underdeveloped with proficient features.

The school collects a wide range of data from multiple sources. The principal, assistant principals and other school leaders have worked hard developing a system of regular scrutiny of this data. This system is particularly effective in the core subjects of English language arts and math where data analysis results in individualized learning outcomes for students. Standardized exam scores serve as a basis for data investigation. Teachers also measure student progress with Acuity assessments, in-class exam grades, class work and homework completion and scores of student projects. This thoughtful data review has allowed for more careful monitoring of the incremental stages in students' academic progress but is not used consistently in other core subjects. The use of data to develop individual learning plans in content areas is limited. Some departments are beginning to use baseline assessments to establish entry grade levels for students although it is too early to assess the impact of this work in examining student progress in content knowledge and skills.

The school has done well in establishing a more pointed focus when using specific student data in developing learning plans for English language learners and special education students. The development of collaborative team teaching classes for both populations is helping teachers ensure that these students' needs are met. This was evidenced in a 'living environment' science lesson where both teachers moved amongst the class addressing queries from all students during a practical lab.

Parents are always made welcome in the school and have come to think of it as their "family oriented" school. There is a school-wide emphasis on getting students to school on time. The school has used resources well to outreach to parents specifically regarding attendance, including daily automated telephone calls from the school's "phonemaster" system. These practices have led to higher attendance rates. The school is establishing regular venues of communications to keep parents fully informed about their child's progress specifically through usage of the ARIS system. However, communication does not convey enough so that all ethnicities feel culturally understood and appreciated in the school building. The school currently sponsors events to promote multi-ethnic harmony. Students recently held a Mardi-Gras school dance. There is also a school tradition of hosting a Men's Day and Women's Day where students, parents and school staff explore social and career gender issues through workshops facilitated by guest speakers and/or trips to cultural venues throughout the City. These are good beginnings to helping all stakeholders develop a deeper understanding and appreciation of others.

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 underdeveloped with proficient features.

The principal’s focus on learning is clear and he sets high expectations for all school constituents. Recently, every teacher developed a class syllabus and parent letter that was disseminated to all students and their families at the beginning of the class term. The school regularly recognizes and applauds student triumphs over personal challenges. Such activities are increasing students’ motivation and encouraging them to take a greater interest and engagement in their studies.

The dissemination of the class syllabus sets the tone for teacher development of subject goals and, in some cases, class goals. This recently adopted practice has given more clarity to students and their parents on what to expect academically for the semester but there is not an established school-wide practice of setting clear and measureable academic goals for each student. The English language arts teachers have done well in using incremental targets for students coupled with a series of next academic steps that are aligned to their four-year curriculum map. Students are able to explain their individual needs in English language arts in addition to stating the overall goals for the course. The school does offer opportunities for students to record and discuss plans for success. Students spoke about their participation in advisory class. This venue provides a good forum for discussion on student aspirations and behavioral changes that prepares them to be productive citizens.

The principal has also led the charge in developing a Comprehensive Educational Plan for the school that has actively involved everyone. He has clearly aligned his principal performance review goals with the school goals. This move exemplified his commitment to transparency in his leadership and resulted in confidence and trust from parents. School stakeholders are keenly familiar with the school’s Progress Report, Learning Environment Survey and other data documents that directed them as they worked with school leaders in developing the whole school goals for this school year. The school community converses openly about such goals that are prominently posted throughout the classrooms. This effective practice keeps the school focus visible for all to see. As one teacher stated, it serves as a reminder to provide “the strongest education possible” to all students.

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.

The school’s curriculum is aligned with the State standards across all core subjects. The assortment of course offerings includes instrumental or vocal music and variations in physical education, which includes dance. The school does well in providing academic support for both students who are struggling and advancement for those capable of achieving higher. Careful programming allows for accelerated learning for both groups

and students may enroll in tutoring or take advanced placement courses during the school day.

While the school offers some choices for advancement at both ends of the academic spectrum, there is insufficient and sometimes no offering of differentiated instruction to meet individual student learning needs in most classes. Teachers are moving towards utilizing differentiated instruction through grouping students according to capability by using information on data trends to inform their instruction. Science teachers recently began a close examination of math Regents exam results to group students in learning clusters. Similarly effective practice was employed in a special education class where the teacher offered multiple and multi-level activities to students based directly upon what student data indicated as their specific need. However, these good practices are not consistent across all core subjects. The principal is committed to school-wide implementation of using student data to influence and guide instruction. The development of curriculum maps, focused professional development and, most pointedly, a revised class observation document all support the school's pledge to implement an effective individualized program of teaching and learning for all students.

The school climate and culture is one where students and adults are mutually respectful. Students have an unwavering confidence that the adults fully support them. One student stated, "Teachers help you with your personal problems. They deepen the bond." While there is no overt evidence of discord, communications is a concern of both students and their parents. The Learning Environment Survey also showed this as a concern of teachers. Specifically there are concerns about building understanding between some different cultures within the school. Students, staff and parents all expressed the need for information and communications that honors the accomplishments of all ethnicities and connects all cultures through common bonds such as the similarities in the practices used during celebrations.

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.

Teachers are rightly appreciative of the opportunity to contribute to their professional development planning. The principal did well to query teachers, via survey and discussion, about their developmental needs during the beginning of the school year. While this was a good start toward building professional development plans for all teachers, the school has not sufficiently provided each teacher with an individualized, detailed plan for growth. The school offers professional development opportunities for general skills building in a wide range of instructional areas such as differentiation and increasing student engagement. This good practice is not yet personalized to meet each teacher's professional learning needs. Additionally, the school has failed to fully institute thinking around the direct connections between student learning needs and the teacher's skill development to increase academic progress.

The school inquiry team stands as a model of commitment and hard work. This team has successfully learned from past practices and adopted the process of delving deep into student data to establish implemental instructional interventions that push student achievement. Their focus on a specific group of student English language learners has

shown some influence throughout the school. The immediate results of their labors has seen increased teacher collaborations, peaking teacher interest in training in data usage such as Acuity, and most importantly, a change of attitude about data. One inquiry team member stated, "Data is not just numbers. We give the data shape." A personnel addition to the team is one of the school's guidance counselors. This inclusion is echoed throughout the school in other areas as the school works on educating the whole child.

The school does a very good job working with students who are struggling to overcome personal issues. Students stated that the school does not give up on you, "If you need help they give you help." Additionally, there are effective working relationships between the school and community-based organizations such as El Puente, Health Corps and others that provide learning opportunities for students via public service actions.

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 underdeveloped with proficient features.

The school leaders are watchful of school data, especially the results of the Regents exam scores. They correctly make comparisons of past and current exam results to chart growth and question trends. While the school collects a wide range of data they currently heavily rely on the results of the State examinations as the primary measurement of progress. These data reviews are formulating the basis for the future vision of the continued development of differentiated instruction as a vehicle to most effectively improve student learning. Continued examination of other data sources is also included in the overarching plans for future student achievement. The principal and cabinet have already begun meeting and discussing how to best use data as they assessed classroom learning during this Quality Review.

The present focus of future changes is insufficiently precise. Although the focus on interim checkpoints is beginning to be used appropriately in the areas of English language arts and math but similar practice is not developed and applied enough to achieve and sustain student success in all core subject areas. Additionally, systems are not yet securely in place to ensure that progress is appropriately monitored and revisions made if required. However, current leadership planning shows promise of establishing clear calendared benchmarks for the upcoming school year.

The principal's vision is clear and he has enlisted the help and support of his cabinet in conveying the message of change for improving student outcomes. The initial steps of relocating offices to place all support service personnel in close proximity of each other has expedited student programming needs. This has also promoted regular staff discussions on how to continue to move all students towards academic success.

School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

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|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|----------|----------|---|
| School name: East Brooklyn Congregations High School for Public Service | △ | ➤ | ✓ | + |
| 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> | Δ | ➤ | ✓ | + | | | |
| 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> | Δ | ➤ | ✓ | + | | | |
| 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> | Δ | ➤ | ✓ | + | | | |
| 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 | | | | | | | |
| Δ | Underdeveloped | ➤ | Underdeveloped with Proficient Features | ✓ | Proficient | + | Well Developed |