



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Brooklyn Occupational Training Center

Public School 721

**64 Avenue X
Brooklyn
NY 11223**

Principal: Wendy Weiss

Dates of review: April 16 - 18, 2007

Reviewer: Ronnie Solow

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Brooklyn Occupational Training Center, a District 75 barrier-free school, educates students with developmental disabilities and autism through a program of academic instruction, tied to functional life skills and activities of daily living, in order to enable independence. The 462 students, from 14 to 21 years of age, are served in classes with 12:1:1, 8:1:1, 6:1:1 and 12:1:4 ratios. The student body ethnic composition is 53.5% Black, 21.72% White, 17.52% Hispanic, and 7.23% Asian and other. Males make up 61% of the students and females 39%. English language learners comprise 8% of the students. Students in the inclusion program, at adjacent Dewey High School, are served in a 9:1 class, with the support of an on-site teacher. There are 28 work study sites that support the vocational emphasis of the school.

Positive behavior support is built into the classroom curriculum. Approved curriculum designs include Treatment and Education of Autistic and other Communication Handicapped Children, picture exchange communication system, the use of Mayer-Johnson symbols, augmentative communication devices and behavior management plans.

All students are served in a 12 month program and are classified as having State alternate assessment evaluations using data folios.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The administrative team works well collaboratively and cooperatively.
- The staff has formed a professional, collaborative community that supports one another in their growth and development.
- Youth development activities support classroom learning.
- Professional development activities are based on staff needs and skill levels.
- Budget, scheduling and staffing decisions are directed to increasing student services.
- The principal is highly visible and knows the students well.
- Many forms of data are collected and analyzed to inform program decisions.
- The building is well maintained with the halls and classrooms decorated with student work samples.
- Students are treated with respect and encouraged to reach their full potential.
- There is a high level of family involvement and support.

What the school needs to improve

- Expand professional development activities in the collection and use of data to inform classroom practices.
- Increase staff knowledge regarding the development and use of individual student portfolios.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a well developed school.

Public School 721, the Brooklyn Occupational Training Center, serves students using an expanded team approach to education of students with handicapping conditions. The principal, completing her first year, was formerly an assistant principal at the school for 11 years. She is supported by three assistant principals, each with specific school assignments according to skills and knowledge. An enlarged cabinet includes the unit coordinator, curriculum coach, transition linkage coordinator, job developer, parent coordinator, guidance counselors, a related services representative, the behavior support staff, a nurse, and the librarian. The goal of the school is to make the students as independent as possible through work and academic experiences.

The principal and her cabinet have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for improvement.

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 student progress over time.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

Many forms of data are gathered and analyzed in order to assess the progress of the school. At the start of the school year, the Brigance Inventories are administered to each student in order to assess the strengths and weaknesses that each brings to the class. The results are then utilized to create the individual education plan for the student and to set the over arching goals for each class and cohort across the school. Students are served in 12:1:1, 8:1:1, 6:1:1 and 12:1:4 programs with appropriate and mandated related service supports. All students are exempt from State testing mandates and New York State data folios are prepared for the target population in literacy, mathematics, science and social studies.

In the classes serving autistic students, Treatment and Education of Autistic and other Communication Handicapped Children methodologies and structures are used. Classroom teachers and paraprofessionals capture frequency data and use it for instructional planning. Other data that informs the classroom planning process include the use of the informal classroom visit checklist, curriculum data sheets that reflect end products of curriculum themes, and the District 75 literacy rubrics. Vocational information generated from work site progress charts, travel training success, transition plans and post school placements are also closely monitored. Attendance, related services information, the progress of English language learners, and related services data is analyzed to determine if there is a need for intervention. Behavior plan data is also closely monitored.

No comparison between similar schools is made as the program for each student is highly individualized. The principal attends monthly network and leadership training sessions

where issues and concerns are discussed and successful practices are shared. The school compares its performance in relation to previous years.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student’s next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student’s learning.

This area of the school’s work is well developed.

Teams are utilized to plan and set goals for the school, cohort, classes and individual students. Three administrative teams are made up of one cabinet comprised of the principal and three assistant principals, a second expanded cabinet that includes the unit coordinator, curriculum coach, transition linkage coordinator, job developer and parent coordinator. Finally, the third general cabinet includes additional personnel representing all constituencies of the school. The school leadership team, responsible for developing the Comprehensive Education Plan, is active and includes five parent members.

Common preparation periods allow teachers to meet with their assistant principal in order to plan, share materials and discuss concerns. The unit coordinator and curriculum coach assist and provide support for the classroom staff, especially during the Brigance Inventories administration and individual education plan development period at the start of the school year. The school utilizes a thematic approach to the curriculum. The individual education plan, report cards and classroom curriculum work are interrelated. The students in greatest need of improvement, those with autism, have individual behavior plans that are closely monitored by the teachers and crisis intervention team. Related services plans are also monitored for toileting, feeding therapy, and nursing services. Increase or reduction of services and movement to less restrictive environment are the aims of the monitoring.

High expectations and goals are conveyed to parents in a variety of ways. At the start of the school year, a parent orientation session is held in the daytime and again in the evening. Translators are present to assure that all present receive the information about the individual education plan, Brigance Inventories and other classroom information. The parent handbook is distributed. The parent coordinator plans monthly workshops on topics of interest such as respite care, guardianship, and transition services. Parents receive daily communication through the communication notebook, behavior plans, contracts, telephone calls, report card conferences and individual education plan meetings, where they are taught how to help their children at home. There is an active parent association and parent membership on the school leadership team.

Teams meet regularly to review data and analyze what is revealed for individual students or cohorts of students. Crisis management paraprofessionals keep logs and anecdotal records and graph behaviors prior to the development of management plans. Through the behavior management plans and school-wide contracts, participation in desired activities and individual rewards are earned. While students travel from classroom to classroom for different subject classes with different teachers, the paraprofessional staff travels with the students to provide consistent adult supervision and support.

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

The curriculum design takes a thematic approach to instruction in English language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, and vocational activities. Every three months school wide, interdisciplinary theme culminates in an activity or product created by the class. The themes provide the unifier for classroom planning, differentiation of instruction and outcomes. The theme for January through March was Thrills and Chills: The Mystery of It All, and April through June, Rhyme and Reason. Packets of materials are prepared for teachers by the curriculum coach who is also available to provide individual assistance. Approved curriculum for handicapped students includes use of leveled libraries, Caught Reading, Syracuse University material, and Write Time for Kids. In classes for autistic students, teachers design their lessons using picture exchange communication system, symbols using Boardmaker computer program and augmentative devices. Communication systems for the students are designed to enhance and propel their ability to communicate. In the Treatment and Education of Autistic and other Communication Handicapped Children classrooms areas are established for small group instruction, work centers and independent study. All classes in the school follow the thematic curriculum design.

Budget, scheduling and staffing decisions are driven by student needs. The greatest portion of the school budget provides direct services to students. Many related service providers in the areas of vision, hearing, nursing, occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech and language as well as health, management, behavior and classroom paraprofessionals support the classroom staff. Students report that there are many staff that they could approach if they required help or support.

Structures, routines and regulations are high priorities for students with challenging behaviors. Behavior management plans and contracts are employed using reinforcements and rewards. Students are engaged and actively working on tasks in the classrooms. Students receive 50 minutes of instruction daily in each of the four main curriculum areas plus an additional 50 minutes of instruction in English language arts and mathematics once a week. Vocational instruction at the school includes food services, food preparation, coffee shop, cafeteria maintenance, print shop, plastics shop and merchandizing. Skills developed in school are then practiced in work-site placements increasing from one day to four days per week. Currently, 28 work sites are providing real life experience for 274 students. The transition linkage coordinator and job developer work collaboratively with the teachers and paraprofessionals to insure that graduates are placed in appropriate settings. Last year 97% of the graduates were placed through school transition services.

Absence triggers immediate response. Students who are travel trained, and travel to school independently, receive a phone call on the first day of absence. All others receive a phone call on the second day and further absence results in a home visit by a staff member. The attendance reward program results in a pizza party for the class with the highest monthly attendance, recognition of individual students with improved and excellent attendance is noted on the attendance bulletin board and 100% attendance for the year earns a significant gift.

Quality Statement 4 - Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

Staff turnover is low. New staff is hired based on ability and desire to work with the student population. Currently, new teachers are selected from the New York City Teaching Fellows Program or through the career ladder for paraprofessionals. Prospective staff is interviewed regarding the use of data and how to capture it effectively, as well as being asked to spend time in the classroom. Professional development opportunities are extensive. In addition to the workshops offered by District 75, staff members make their needs known through a questionnaire. Professional development activities at the school include data collection, how to capture and use anecdotal information, differentiated instruction, feeding therapy, using adaptive technology, and creating communication devices. Teachers use the common preparation period as a time to discuss instructional strategies and to assist one another.

Teachers are observed informally and formally by the principal and assistant principals. This year the principal is working with the service providers and the assistant principals with the classroom teachers. Written reports and the pre and post observation conferences provide feedback on the lesson and specifically cite the use of data and assessment techniques in the classroom. Staff members requiring assistance with a particular technique or strategy receive assistance from the curriculum coach or colleagues. The principal and assistant principals meet two to three times per week to review the progress of the school. The full cabinet and faculty meet once a month and data is always reviewed and discussed for its implications. Teachers meet formally and informally during lunch and common preparation periods. A grant from District 75 is enabling an after school team to develop work plans on data collection, analysis and implications of the data. There are collegial groups and curriculum groups examining how to improve academic outcomes.

The school runs smoothly and efficiently. Rules, regulations and routines are known and followed by students and staff. The information is contained in handbooks for staff and parents. The principal is respected by staff, parents and students for her knowledge, administrative ability, special education knowledge, openness and accessibility.

The school has linkages with many organizations that support the vocational emphasis of the school and encourage the growth and development of the students. There are four after-school recreation programs, as well as many school sponsored activities designed to treat the students like their general education peers. These include the senior prom, a three day overnight trip to the Pocono mountains, school picnic, Special Olympics, performances, student council and family activities.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerated learning.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

The ability to set goals, monitor and subsequently revise them is demonstrated throughout the school. The Comprehensive Education Plan is examined at regular intervals at school

leadership team meetings. The safety plan, behavior modification plans and individual education plans are examined by the administrative team and other involved school personnel to assess their effectiveness.

The principal and assistant principals meet with teachers to review the progress of student assessments, development of individual education plans, lessons and differentiated instructional materials along with behavior modification plans. A pacing calendar is distributed to the staff at the start of the school year and serves as the benchmark for the assessment activities. Completion is measured against the target dates outlined on the calendar.

A mid-year review of the goals and objectives on the Comprehensive Education Plan was carried out by the leadership team in order to determine whether further revisions were necessary. This review precedes an upcoming leadership team walkthrough review of the school, using an old State document called the PASS review, to assess progress and needs. The findings will be incorporated into the Comprehensive Education Plan for the 2007-2008 school year.

Data serves as the benchmark for each student, class and cohort at the school. The principal's goals and objectives and those of the assistant principals, emanate from the Comprehensive Education Plan and filter down to the staff through team, department and faculty meetings. The application of the goals and objectives is measured in the classes through formative and summative assessment data and other anecdotal material. Review of dismissal procedures and behavior data brought the realization that students were exhibiting behavioral problems at dismissal. A revamped procedure has resulted in a significant reduction of problems.

Students with multiple handicapping conditions have great needs. In order to meet these needs constant monitoring and revisions of plans, programs and services are necessary. Working cooperatively with each student's family, the school strives to make the education an individual, personal and relevant experience in order to enable each student to reach their full potential.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Brooklyn Occupational Training Center (PS 721)	∅	✓	+
Quality Score			X

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 student progress over time.	∅	✓	+
1.1 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> each student, classroom, grade level, 			X
1.2 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ethnic groups, English language learners, special education students* 			X
1.3 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> all other categories of interest to the school* 			X
1.4 Performance and progress are measured based on comparisons with similar schools, with the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grade levels, academic subject areas, ethnic groups, and other groupings of interest within the school.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 1			X

* These criteria are partially aspirational as of now because schools do not have routine access to all of this data. The NYC DOE plans to provide schools with enhanced access to the necessary data in 2007.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.	∅	✓	+
2.1 Using data, school leaders and faculty engage in a collaborative process to set demanding, objectively measurable goals for immediate and long-range improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals.			X
2.2 Goals and plans focus on the school as a whole and 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 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.			X
2.4 High expectations are conveyed to students and parents/caregivers. Students and their parents/caregivers are regularly invited to provide information about each student's performance and how to improve. This information is central to setting challenging goals and developing, evaluating, and revising plans.			X
2.5 Goals and plans for improving student performance and progress drive the activity of all members of the school community: leaders, staff, students, parents, and other partners.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 2			X

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity, resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.	∅	✓	+
3.1 The school selects the curriculum based on how well it aligns with or implements the mandated curriculum and on the curriculum's capacity to generate meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and to support the school's high expectations and improvement plans.			X
3.2 Teachers are accountable for improving instruction and student outcomes. They plan and differentiate their instruction based on the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.3 Budgeting decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.			X
3.4 Staffing decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.			X
3.5 Scheduling decisions about the use of teacher and student time are guided by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes.			X
3.6 Instructional programs actively engage students.			X
3.7 Staff know and respect students and respond to their academic needs, as well as their personal needs that affect academic performance. Each student knows and trusts an adult on the staff who is concerned about him or her.			X
3.8 Student attendance and engagement are high priorities. High rates and patterns of absences trigger immediate intervention.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 3			X
Quality Statement 4 – Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.	∅	✓	+
4.1 Leaders, faculty, and staff are selected based on their high expectations for student performance and progress and based on their commitment and capacity to use data, compare outcomes within and across classrooms and schools and develop and revise plans and methods to improve performance and progress.			X
4.2 Professional development decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes. Professional development is designed to help leaders, faculty, and staff use data, self- and peer-assessments, and collaboration with peers to achieve goals for improved school and student outcomes. Professional development and self- and peer-evaluation are aligned and overlap.			X
4.3 The principal frequently observes classroom teaching and has a considered strategy for improving the quality of each teacher's instruction. Teachers frequently observe and support each other's classroom instruction with the goal of improving student outcomes.			X
4.4 Planning, evaluation of results, and revision of plans takes place in teams. Leaders and faculty inform each other of their goals and results, candidly evaluate themselves and each other, and use what is learned to drive improvement.			X
4.5 The principal is respected and has capacity to effect change.			X
4.6 The school runs smoothly. Procedures are clear, communicated to all, and are generally followed.			X
4.7 The school aligns youth development and support services around stated academic goals. Partnerships with outside bodies are routinely used to achieve academic goals.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 4			X
Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.	∅	✓	+
5.1 All school plans and other interventions include frequent interim goals and diagnostic assessments of progress designed to reveal in objectively measurable ways whether the plan is being effectively implemented and reaching stated goals.			X
5.2 Comparisons of student progress within and across classrooms and schools are used in making interim diagnostic assessments and measuring the progress of plans and interventions.		X	
5.3 Information generated by periodic assessments and diagnostic measures of progress and comparisons is used to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals. Interim and final goals are modified when data objectively demonstrate that revision is required.			X
5.4 Each plan's interim and final outcomes drive successive phases of goal setting and improvement planning, and each successive phase is characterized by agile and flexible realignment of practices and resources to improve student academic outcomes.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 5			X