



**Department of
Education**

Joel I. Klein, Chancellor

**Quality Review Report
Office of Accountability
2008-2009**

Quality Review Report 2008-2009

Connie Lekas School

Middle-High School 811

**2525 Haring Street
Brooklyn
NY 11235**

Principal: Antoinette Rose

Dates of review: March 9 - 11, 2009

Lead Reviewer: Christina Lewis

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Connie Lekas is a middle-high school with 426 students from grades 6 through 12. The school population comprises 57% Black, 21% Hispanic, 17% White, 4% Asian, and 1% American Indian students. The student body includes 14% English language learners and 100% special education students. Boys account for 61% of the students enrolled and girls account for 39%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 84.1%.

Connie Lekas is a center for students with multiple disabilities, and serves students aged 11 through 21. All students are assessed by the New York State Alternate Assessments, except for a few students attending the inclusion sites. There are two junior high and two high school inclusion sites where students are included with general education students. The review included a visit to one of the high school sites. The new principal took up post at the start of this academic year.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

In the short time since she has been in her position, the principal has had a major impact on the work of the Connie Lekas School. Her clear vision, represented by the words “Together we make it happen”, has enabled her to put in place systems and structures to improve learning outcomes for students and provide a positive and safe learning environment that promotes the academic and personal growth of students and staff.

The school effectively collects and uses a wide range of data. Because of this, there is a clear understanding of student needs. Students’ goals link closely to individual education plans, and build on what students know and can do and identify the next steps in their learning, including functional life skills. However, teachers’ use of data to plan differentiated activities is not always consistent or used to meet individual need. As a result, students are not always fully engaged in their learning or supported in reaching their goals. The school has yet to develop common assessment strategies so that all teachers can monitor and track student progress through the year. The inclusion program successfully supports students in mainstream settings.

The inquiry team has had a positive impact on encouraging collaboration and teamwork among the staff. In addition, the wide range of professional development opportunities and introduction of teaching standards has encouraged teachers and other staff in becoming reflective and evaluative about their work. However, school leaders have yet to regularly monitor the performance of teachers and provide evaluative feedback in order to improve further instructional practice.

Effective transition plans, work programs and guidance ensure that students are given every opportunity to develop their skills and are well prepared for life as young adults in the community. The school has yet to improve communications with parents to ensure that they are fully engaged in its work and have more opportunities to be active partners in supporting their children’s personal and academic growth.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal has a clear vision for the future development of the school and, in a relatively short time, she has had a positive impact on school improvement.
- The school effectively collects, analyzes and uses a wide range of data to understand the needs of individual students.
- Realistic goals that identify next steps are linked to individual education plans and build on what the students know and can do.
- The school is a safe learning environment that promotes a positive culture of trust and respect, successfully fostering the academic and personal growth of students and staff.
- Effective guidance plans, transition plans and workplace opportunities successfully enhance students' functional life skills.
- The work of the inquiry team has had a positive impact in promoting teamwork and collaboration among staff.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop strategies to involve more parents in the work of the school by strengthening communications to include an open exchange of information regarding learning needs, transition plans and long-term goals.
- Further develop teachers' use of data in planning differentiated instruction and activities to meet the needs of all learners.
- Regularly monitor the performance of teachers and provide evaluative feedback and support for improved classroom practice.
- Develop common strategies and systems so that all staff can demonstrate how they monitor and track student progress and set goals to accelerate student learning.

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 to do and to monitor the student's progress over time.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

School leaders collect and analyze a wide range of summative and formative data to gain a clear picture of each student's need. This year in September the school administered the Brigance Inventories to all students so that they could determine performance-level benchmarks and develop individual education plan goals for the academic year. All students in the main building are assessed using the New York State alternate assessments. Some students in the inclusion units are assessed on the New York standardized tests. Teachers and support staff review all previous test data and use predictive assessments to identify skill areas that require more support. Teachers have created student binders that give a comprehensive profile of each student, including social and emotional needs. As a result, there is a close alignment of individual goals to address student need and teachers have a very clear picture of the strengths and needs of each student. This in-depth analysis of student need has enabled the school to ensure that each student receives the correct related services and adaptive materials, including specific devices to enhance speech and hearing.

The school has effectively analyzed data to understand the learning outcomes of its student subgroups and has taken action to ensure that instruction is in place to address any discrepancies. For example, English language learners now receive appropriate bilingual support to enhance their language skills. The inquiry team has successfully targeted a group of students who have difficulty with communication skills. Teachers are trained to access ARIS as a resource. The inquiry team uses this information to study all of the data on the target group of students. Because of this, a teacher discovered that one student was in the wrong type of wheelchair and that the way she was sitting restricted her speech. As a result, the school has advised parents that it will take the responsibility of talking to suppliers and ensuring the correct equipment is available to meet students' needs. The inquiry team shares successful strategies with staff. Initial data indicates that this approach has improved not only the target group's level of communication, but also that of other students throughout the school.

The school communicates with parents through newsletters, regular progress reports, as well as conferences on individual education plans. However, parents feel that the levels of communication could be better, particularly in the sharing of transition plans, school-wide goals and the school's vision. The administrative team recognizes that it has to reach out to involve more parents in the work of the school and has already planned whole-school events where parents can celebrate the success of their children.

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.

The principal and the staff team set rigorous goals and action plans for school improvement at the beginning of the school year. These form part of the Comprehensive Education Plan. Evidence indicates that working towards these goals has had a major impact on the work of the school in improving outcomes for students. For example, strong systems and procedures are now in place to ensure that students’ needs are being met. As a result, the school leadership team is currently preparing new goals for the next stage of the school’s development that involve the entire school community

The school is divided into three cohorts to better identify similar characteristics of student need. Weekly cohort meetings give teachers an opportunity to discuss and share best practices towards increasing student performance. As a result, teachers are no longer working in isolation and are becoming more confident in the regular use of data and assessments to track students’ progress towards meeting their goals.

Through various assessments, teachers generate goals for each student according to need. These include academic, behavioral and social goals, as well as functional life skills. The goals are broken down into achievable steps and shared with students. As a result, many students are able to articulate what their goals are and how they are going to achieve them. For example, students whose goal was to improve computation skills explained how they were practicing these skills in a shopping activity involving money. Another student with impaired vision explained how his goal is to walk unaided down the stairs. The occupational therapist instructed him in how to use a cane and they practice this several times during the day. Many students have jobs within the school environment that enhance their life skills, for example as messengers or by undertaking office tasks. One student with severe disabilities was very proficient at inputting data on an Excel spreadsheet.

Students in the inclusion class at Edward R Morrow School also have goals that relate to New York standards in English, math social studies and science. The inclusion teachers support them very well in working to achieve their goals. Several students have already passed their Regents in math and earth sciences. One student has been so successful in achieving her goals that she is joining the school as a mainstream student.

The school shares student goals with parents through conferences and regular progress reports. However, the school acknowledges that communication with parents is not effective enough in actively securing their full involvement and encouraging participation. The school has yet to fully involve and engage parents in all aspects of its work so that parents are more effective in supporting their children’s education.

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 effectively provides a challenging curriculum, including the arts. Every student has the opportunity to participate in music, dance and art in addition to participating in school productions, a regular highlight on the school’s calendar. This year the school leaders have introduced a project-based curriculum that includes assessment benchmarks and a pacing calendar. It is based on State standards and culminates in a class project that students present to other classes and cohorts. As a result, teachers have a focus that is consistent across the school and encourages collaboration and teamwork among students as well as staff. For example, the current school-wide project on American idols encourages students to develop skills in all aspects of communication, in addition to providing a common focus. This way of working is very new to the school and school leaders have yet to fully evaluate and modify the program to ensure continuity and consistency between classes and cohorts.

The school runs a work program where students who are capable have opportunities to develop their skills in the workplace. One student, through this program, has successfully obtained regular employment at a nearby fast-food store. The school is efficient in ensuring that students can practice and develop these skills on a daily basis. As a result, some students are prepared for employment once they finish school. However, the school is further developing opportunities for all students to have meaningful work once they leave school.

Teachers are in the early stages of using data to plan lessons and, while some lessons are fully differentiated to meet each student’s learning need, this is not always consistent practice throughout the school. As a result, learning does not always help students’ meet their potential, build on prior achievement or fully engage them in learning.

The school is a safe learning environment that promotes a positive culture of trust and respect. As a result it successfully fosters the academic and personal growth of students and staff. The introduction of a school-wide positive behavior intervention program has had a significant impact on the learning environment and additionally has contributed to the improved attendance of both students and staff.

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 plans professional development around whole-school needs and individual needs based on observations and professional discussion. The introduction of the Santa Cruz model of teaching standards has encouraged teachers to be more reflective about their practice. In consultation with the administration, teachers set individual goals to enhance their professional growth. The coach provides support in the classroom, in addition to teachers being encouraged to attend external training. The school also provides a range of in-house professional development opportunities for all staff including paraprofessionals, which has allowed staff to improve their teaching skills. For example, an external autism coach works weekly with teachers on developing programs

to meet the needs of autistic students. As a result, teachers say they are more confident in using up-to-date methods teaching these students and feel that their practice is improving. An effective mentoring program similarly supports new teachers. However, school leaders have yet to fully monitor and evaluate the impact of professional development on teachers' performance and on improved student outcomes.

The work of the inquiry team has empowered staff to engage in action research. It has also had a positive impact in promoting collaboration and teamwork. It has effectively strengthened staff knowledge of how to interpret data and in developing teaching strategies that can be used school wide. Regular voluntary "lunch and learn" meetings encourage professional dialogue and collegial sharing. As a result, teachers are becoming more reflective in their practice, sharing resources and using inter-visitations as a way of evaluating the effectiveness of each other's work.

The school implements an effective guidance plan that supports students and their families and enhances the personal and social development of students. Related services for occupational therapy and speech work alongside teachers in the classroom, providing a seamless approach to meeting students needs. The school effectively utilizes a wide range of external partners and services to support students in developing functional life skills. For example, a group of students visits a partner school that specializes in cosmetology to work on grooming skills, another group works in school to develop skills in basic office work, while others go out into the community and experience work in local businesses. Because of this, many students develop independence and are encouraged to make informed choices about their future placements once they have left school. The school also hosts an extensive "transition fair" involving local companies and support agencies to ensure that students and their families know all the options that are available to support them as adults.

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 administrative team systematically monitors and reviews available data on individual students and revises plans as necessary. For example, a review of attendance data and identifying reasons for absence enabled the school to support families in getting their children to return to school. Similarly, a review of travel data has resulted in a reduction in the number of bus paraprofessionals. As a result, more students are moving towards independence. The school reviews plans and goals regularly to ensure alignment with the specific needs of students. All students have binders which give an in-depth profile of their strengths and needs. Although teachers update these regularly, the school has yet to develop common strategies and systems so that all staff can demonstrate how they monitor and track student progress and set goals to accelerate student learning.

The principal uses the available data including the learning environment survey and last Quality Review report to evaluate the effectiveness of organizational decisions. She shares these with her leadership team and they modify plans as required. Many of the changes the school has implemented this year are derived from an effective in-depth analysis of this data. As a result, the principal and the staff team have a very clear understanding of what needs to happen to secure school improvement. The goals in the Comprehensive Education Plan clearly reflect this and have clear timeframes and success criteria to ensure the school is on track to achieve this. The Comprehensive Education Plan and the principal's clear vision for the future development of the school

have already had a positive impact in improving the school's climate. This has not yet been explicitly shared with parents and the wider community, and the principal recognizes the need to do this to create strong partnerships to support students' learning and welfare.

School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

School name: Connie Lekas 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, DYQ, 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							
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							
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							
Quality Review Scoring Key							
Δ	Underdeveloped	➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed