



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

The Albany Avenue School

Public School 091

**532 Albany Ave
Brooklyn
NY 11203**

Principal: Solomon Long

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Reviewer: Peter Lewis

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Albany Avenue School is a long established elementary school with students in grades kindergarten through 5. There are currently 881 students enrolled, of whom 12.8% are special education students, a high proportion, and 4.3% are English language learners.

Most of the students come are Black (93%), with a smaller group of 5% Hispanic and just over 1% who come from a White or Asian background. The school has 93% of students who are Title 1 eligible which is much higher than the City average. The school works hard to ensure good attendance and punctuality. Average attendance is consistently above 90% and similar to the City average. The number of students who are newly arrived in the country is slightly above average for City and similar schools, with most coming from the Caribbean.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school has been successful in improving students' learning so that achievement, particularly in English language arts and in mathematics, has risen over time.
- School leaders have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development and have used this effectively in securing improvement.
- The principal and the assistant principals have worked hard to set the tone of the school so that high expectations of behavior and learning characterize the school's work.
- Teachers know their students well and use this knowledge to provide very good levels of support and guidance for their students.
- Parents are proud that their children go to the school and are particularly pleased by the success of intervention programs.
- Students are keen to learn and their enthusiasm is captured well by teachers to create engagement in lessons.
- Teachers are chosen based on the skills that they can bring to the school; they demonstrate strong commitment.

What the school needs to improve

- Refine and simplify school development planning to involve staff at different levels in evaluation, to create an achievable number of goals within each annual cycle and mechanisms whereby progress towards the goals can be accurately measured and modifications made if necessary.
- Ensure that all teachers use the good range of assessment information to differentiate instruction fully, particularly for higher achieving students.
- Implement existing plans to involve students more in assessing their acquisition of knowledge and skills.
- Implement plans to form a student council so that all students can make a greater contribution to the running of the school.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school with a number of well developed features.

Albany Avenue School is proficient overall, and there are a number of well developed features that demonstrate its good capacity for further improvement. Relationships throughout the school are strong and, as a result, productive. Students feel safe and valued and, because of this, have very positive attitudes to their work and are eager to learn. Modifications to the curriculum have been successful and have resulted in a steady growth in both English language arts and mathematics scores. The school is, however, not complacent and has made good use of the available data in, for example, identifying the need to increase the proportion of students who achieve at level 4.

Although many parents find it difficult to involve themselves fully in the school, there is ample evidence that parents value the work done by the school in educating their children and in helping them to become well rounded citizens. They particularly like the open door policy in which the principal and other staff are always welcoming, keen to hear about their concerns and ready to take swift action to address any problems.

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.

This school makes very effective use of data. The principal and teachers regularly evaluate how well students are doing, what progress they have made, and what they need to do to advance in their learning. Because of this, the school is able to show a steady trend of improvement over time in comparison with similar schools and those across the City. The school continues to focus on improving classroom practice while raising teachers' expectations of what the students can achieve.

Special education students and English language learners receive high quality support and as a result make significant progress. Individual education plans are drawn up by teachers in consultation with specialist and support staff, and the progress made towards achieving the goals identified in these is carefully monitored through assessment and discussion. This enables the school to take action should there be any slowing of progress by individual students. As a result, these students make rapid progress towards achieving their goals. The school has been particularly successful in improving the performance of its lowest achieving students, both in English language arts and in mathematics. Using data, it has identified the need to take planned action to identify the reasons behind the relative underperformance of Black students, particularly boys, at the higher levels in English language arts and, to a lesser extent, in mathematics.

Teachers make good use of rubrics to help them to assess students' progress and to enable students to know what is good in their work and where it could be improved. For students receiving additional support, teachers provide evidence of performance and

progress, including a range of interventions, differentiation, and the results of classroom assessment and reading levels. There is good communication between class or subject teachers and the academic intervention teachers, who support students with the greatest needs. This has a positive impact on students' progress.

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 proficient.

The school is effective in using the data it has on its students. Teachers collaborate well in their teams, which enables information about students' achievement to be compared and effective strategies to be formulated. The involvement of one of the assistant principals in these meetings enables them to be data focused and this is reinforced well by the input from the mathematics and literacy coaches. This support is valued by staff. Coaches serve to create a link between each grade across the school. While these meetings are effective in raising awareness and in identifying good practice, their relative informality means that opportunities can be missed to identify programs that need to be implemented across the school.

The school has made appropriate use of data to target students with a range of interventions and support. The introduction of programs to support younger students in writing skills is a good example of this and has been effective in raising standards. High expectations are seen in teachers' comments on students' work. Aspects of students' writing and mathematics development which are particularly successful are accurately identified, although there is less emphasis on what is needed in order to improve or on subsequent targets.

Parents are pleased with the range and quality of information that is made available to them by the school. Written communications are clear and parents appreciate the readiness with which the principal, assistant principal and teachers are available to meet with them. As a result, parents feel that they are fully involved in their children's education. Students are kept well informed about their progress as work is undertaken. Although the school has identified the need to involve students more in the assessment of their own work, this is at a very early stage and so has yet to have an impact on their learning.

Students with identified learning needs receive good quality services. The school makes use of a wide range of tests and assessments and uses these well to identify progress in relation to the goals that are set. Individual education plans are accurate and regularly updated following discussion between teachers and the support staff. Parents are kept well informed about their children's progress.

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 proficient.

The school is focused on making its curriculum varied and challenging. Lessons are generally well planned, carefully structured and almost always follow agreed upon

routines. Common features, such as rubrics to help students understand what is required of them, are present in many classrooms while work and resources are displayed attractively. Teachers have a very clear understanding of the ways in which they can help students to remain on task and learn effectively. Teachers feel a real sense of accountability for their students' learning and have access to good quality data that, in the best practice, is used well in planning that is varied according to students' needs. The school is aware that there is some inconsistency in this, as revealed by the recent reduced proportion of students attaining level 4 in literacy and mathematics.

The implementation of clear strategies for differentiating the activities that these higher achieving students undertake has been identified as an area for development. Further potential improvement may be gained by extending teachers' skills in developing students' self-assessment and in assessing progress on an ongoing basis. A good model for aspects of this already exists in the programs which are available for lower-achieving students. They are well supported through the skilled use of 'push in' and 'pull out' instruction, focused accurately upon their needs. In addition, frequent and accurate assessment of their progress enables instruction to be varied in line with their learning. Because of these features, these students consistently make good progress in reaching the targets that are set for them.

The students respond well to teachers' high expectations of them and, as a result, are keen to learn and concentrate well. They are well motivated and actively look forward to coming to school. Strong emphasis is placed on students' social and personal development and this has a positive impact on their engagement and their self confidence. Students are given a good range of responsibilities, although the school recognizes that still more could be done and has plans in place to form a student council to give students greater input into the school's operation.

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.

The school has high expectations of its students and teachers that are well promoted through comprehensive and effective strategies of monitoring and support. There is a clear sense of purpose in the building; adults and students are focused on what they are doing and talk about their work with pride. As a result the school functions smoothly. Professional discussions take place formally and informally and outside support and guidance is actively sought and used to help the school move forward. Staff demonstrate exceptional commitment to the school and its students by willingly volunteering to take on responsibilities beyond those required of them.

The principal is energetic in setting the tone and direction of the school and, with very good support from other leaders, has created a skilled and effective team. The use of data to evaluate what works well and where improvement is required has improved and, because of this, the school is able to deploy its staff according to their strengths or take appropriate action where results demonstrate that teachers are experiencing difficulties. The principal does not shy away from taking a strong lead both in the appointment and in the deployment of staff, and he does this in a manner that is consistently supportive of the school's goals. Professional development is given a high priority. Every teacher is regularly observed teaching and their work is evaluated. The school uses information from these observations to identify the range of effectiveness of instruction as well as to analyze

whole school issues. A good example is in the development of strategies to enhance experiential and investigative learning. Previously an unfamiliar concept for many longer-term staff, this now features much more consistently in the school's curriculum. In this, as in other developments, the skills of the mathematics and literacy coaches have been well utilized in building teachers' confidence.

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 proficient.

The school has set up effective procedures through which it is able to track and monitor the progress of individual students. These are used well in identifying aspects of learning that require improvement. Through these evaluations the school is aware, for example, that it needs to increase the proportion of students who are attaining level 4 to match their progress with the numbers moving up from levels 1 and 2. Effective use is made of this information in introducing actions, such as increasing the use of interim student and teacher assessments, to ensure that the curriculum and instruction consistently match students' needs.

Planning for whole school improvement is comprehensive and makes good use of a wide range of data and both formal and informal evaluations of teachers' and students' work. However, in its present format, this planning lacks sufficient detail in terms of timescale, monitoring strategies and evaluation mechanisms. At the same time, the number of goals that have been established is more than can reasonably be achieved in the identified timescale. This makes it difficult to ensure that the intended changes have been achieved. The school has not yet established criteria by which it can more accurately evaluate its progress towards the identified goals so that plans can be modified, where necessary, at an early stage to remedy shortcomings or further accelerate the rate of progress.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Albany Avenue School (PS 91)	∅	✓	+
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	