



**NYCDOE**

**Quality Review: Final Report**

# **The New York City Department of Education**



# **Quality Review Report**

**Benson School**

**Public School 200**

**1940 Benson Avenue  
Brooklyn  
NY 11214**

**Principal: Sylvia La Cerra**

**Dates of review: December 12 - 15, 2006**

**Reviewer: Margaret Lee**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Benson School is an elementary school with 1210 enrolled students in pre-kindergarten through grade 5. At 6% the proportion of special education students is below that of similar and City schools. The school's population comprises 47.61% White, 31.87% Asian and Pacific Islander, 16.87% Hispanic, 2.76% Black, and 0.65% American Indian students. Seventeen percent of students are English language learners which is a higher proportion than similar and City schools. The school receives Title 1 funding.

The attendance level at 94% is higher than similar and City schools.

The school curriculum includes the program 'Gifted Learners of Bilingual Education' which is a district wide program with test-based entry to students across the region. This offers a range of diverse programs for the wide range of performance levels within the student enrolment. A dual language Russian program in kindergarten through grade 1 meets the needs of the local population. An early childhood violin program has been established for five years.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal gives strong leadership and guides staff effectively to meet her high expectations for the success of all.
- The school uses a varied range of programs and instruction which meets the needs of all students.
- The school uses data effectively and so knows what each student understands and can do.
- The school has a positive climate and students cooperate and care for each other.
- Teachers are enthusiastic, highly-skilled and focused on continuing to learn themselves so they can share this with their students.
- A wide range of professional development activities is planned collaboratively and responds to the school's and individual teachers' needs.
- The students are excited about their work and are exceptionally focused in class
- The school provides a wealth of information for students and parents.
- Teachers' classrooms are stimulating learning spaces with bright displays which celebrate students' work and provide useful prompts for learning.
- As a result of strong partnerships, parents are supportive and are very proud to be a part of the school.

### What the school needs to improve

- Build in time for teachers to reflect on the effectiveness of their own practice when talking about student progress.
- Determine interim goals for student progress that help school leaders and staff to measure progress towards the school's long-term goals.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This is a well-developed school.**

The school is dedicated to giving students high quality learning experiences which successfully support their performance and progress. The school gives equal importance to developing each student's personal as well as their academic skills and so students behave well and treat each other with respect. All staff are committed to ensuring the work they do benefits all students.

The school has established teams that work together well to tackle issues and put together effective plans for improvement. Decisions are based securely on information gained through assessment data and observations of classes. All teachers are involved in looking at and interpreting data and use the information well when planning classes. Teachers measure how effective their teaching has been every day against the gains in students' learning. Additional intervention is agreed and given to help any student at risk of not making enough progress.

The school principal and two assistant principals work well as a team to ensure that the review and evaluation of student progress is constant and continuous. Outcomes of each review inform the school's next stage of action planning. The school is continuously reviewing how well its curriculum, instruction and programs are helping students to achieve well. It asks itself focused and relevant questions such as, 'Did the students learn it?' when evaluating how effective instruction has been.

### **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.**

The school collects an extensive range of data about how well individual students are performing in English language arts, mathematics, science and social studies and so has a very secure knowledge of what each student is able to do in these subjects. In addition, teachers keep ongoing records of each student's achievements gained from conferencing, observations of what students learn in class and a range of diagnostic tests. These give more precise information about individual students' development of subject-specific skills. The organization of data is very accessible and well documented.

The school uses the information to compare how well individual and different groupings of students are doing class by class and grade by grade and so identify the steps required to improve teaching. Particular emphasis is given to analyzing the data gathered for special education students and English language learners so that appropriate support and intervention programs are put into place to accelerate their progress. The academic intervention team meets regularly to discuss the performance and progress of students who are at risk of slipping back and to plan instructional programs which will help them reach the expected standard in City and State tests. Data is used effectively to identify gifted students and to plan enrichment activities to extend their learning.

The school is aware of how different achievement levels and ethnic groups perform and are astute to the differences between boys' and girls' performance. The school compares how well it does with similar schools, across classes, grades and subjects and from year to year.

**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.**

All school leaders and staff are committed to making sure the students do as well as they can. The school has good systems in place for grade and instructional staff to work collaboratively with school leaders to plan the action needed to improve student performance and progress in each class and grade. Discussions are very open and purposeful, with teaching staff freely participating and asking questions because they know their contributions will be acknowledged and valued. Data from assessments are used effectively to identify strengths and areas of concern for each student and the information is used well to identify the small learning steps students need to take to make progress. The information is used effectively to plan teaching that will help students to improve on their previous learning. However, data on student performance and progress is not used so well to set goals that can be measured and so check whether the school's goals are likely to be achieved.

Precise checks are carried out to make sure special education students and English language learners have specific goals to help accelerate their progress. All special education teachers meet with the principal weekly to discuss and plan work for their students and to check that each one is making enough progress against their goals outlined in individual education plans. The school recognizes that parents provide valuable support in helping these students to play 'catch up' in order to meet the standards. There is a strong after-school program for students needing additional one-to-one support. The school has a commitment to all students. For example, where students are not able to attend after-school sessions due to transport problems, the school organizes these during the school day.

The school communicates clearly with parents, using translations wherever necessary, to share information about their children's progress and to gather information about their needs. Through the work of the school leadership team, parents play an active part in the school decision-making and in seeking high performance from school programs. The very able and proactive parent coordinator involves parents well in school development and goal-setting. As a result, parents support the work of the school and take a keen interest in their children's development.

**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.**

Teachers know their students' personal and academic needs well and use this knowledge to modify the curriculum content. For the most part, they plan activities that consider how

students learn as well as what they want them to learn and so present lessons in interesting ways. Science activities are very rich and exciting for students with a lot of student participation in lessons. Consequently, students are highly motivated and engaged in their work. Learning and behavior routines are established and so students behave well and have positive attitudes to school.

The school has established a curriculum that identifies what is to be taught and when. However, it has not yet linked the curriculum content with its assessments and so cannot measure precisely enough its effectiveness in helping the school in achieving its goals. The school's strong arts program enables all students to participate in visual art, band, chorus and violin, and the school's 'Children's Musical Theater' performs regularly to parents and the community.

The school ensures budget decisions and resources support learning. Each classroom has a varied range of learning centers and teachers make sure learning materials support individual student needs. A well-resourced technology classroom gives each student good opportunity to develop computer skills and, because learning is linked to other studies, consolidates learning in other subjects. Literacy and mathematics coaches give good support to teachers' professional development. The school day operates peacefully and smoothly. It is well organized and transition from one program to another is responsibly managed by students. Time is used effectively to schedule the school day to ensure students receive the mandated curriculum and opportunities to take part in a varied range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities, including the arts and music.

Attendance is a high priority, and is above the levels of Citywide and similar schools. The school follows up with families if absenteeism continues for more than two days.

**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 selects staff according to whether they have high expectations of student performance and progress and a commitment to helping the school achieve its goals. Professional development is well planned to meet the needs of individual staff members and the school. Grading of student work is frequently discussed. The collaboration between teachers is exceptionally productive and influential on improving practices for increasing student performance levels. Teachers visit each other's classrooms frequently to pick up ideas and learn from each other. Visits to special education classrooms have been particularly beneficial for teachers to learn how differentiated instruction is supporting these students.

The principal, assistant principals and coaches monitor how well teachers use information about their students through meetings with individual teachers, faculty meetings and through frequent classroom visits. They get into classes regularly and so know at first hand the quality of learning across the school. Regular learning walks throughout the school lead to objective and open discussions with teachers about their work. As a result, the quality of teaching is continually being refined and improved to meet the needs of every student in school.

Staff work productively in teams to look at data and to talk about subsequent student progress. Opportunities to reflect on and evaluate what this means in terms of their own

performance as teachers are not currently part of the team's discussions within the limited time available to meet.

The principal is highly respected by staff, parents and students for her leadership in establishing well-developed teaching and learning practices throughout the school. With good support from her administration team and staff, she ensures that everyone is clear about procedures so that the school runs smoothly from day to day.

Strong partnerships with outside bodies make a significant contribution to the school's achievements. Teachers' College materials support students' knowledge of how to structure writing. The 'Gifted Learners of Bilingual Education' and a dual language Russian program in grades kindergarten and 1, unique to New York City, meets the particular needs of the local and wider community. The programs successfully help students to develop fluency in English and Russian. Due to its strengths in working with other school to enhance its students' learning, the school has been recognized as a Collaborative Community of Practice Schools by the Department of Education.

**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.**

This is a place where reflection about the data is an integral part of the culture of the school. Staff and school leaders regularly evaluate how well programs have been implemented through a well-organized team structure. The Comprehensive Education Plan involves all staff and provides a comprehensive analysis of what the school does well and what it needs to do to improve. This process involves parents who are part of the senior leadership team and other parents at parent teacher meetings when the information is shared. A secure analysis of data provides good information about performance and helps the school to identify relevant whole-school goals. Interim goals based on student performance and progress are not identified precisely enough to help the school measure whether it is on track to achieve its goals. It routinely uses qualitative and quantitative data to monitor students' progress to inform its decision-making and action planning and adjustments are made in response to its monitoring and evaluation activities.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: Benson School (PS 200)</b>	∅	✓	+
<b>Quality Score</b>			<b>X</b>

<b>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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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: each student, classroom, grade level,			<b>X</b>
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: ethnic groups, English Language Learners, special education students*			<b>X</b>
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: all other categories of interest to the school*			<b>X</b>
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.			<b>X</b>
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>			<b>X</b>

\* 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.

<b>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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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.		<b>X</b>	
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.			<b>X</b>
2.3 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.			<b>X</b>
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.			<b>X</b>
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.			<b>X</b>
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>			<b>X</b>

<b>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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>			X
<b>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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>			X
<b>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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>			X