



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Gerritsen Beach School

Public School 277

**2529 Gerritsen Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11229**

Principal: Jeanne Fish

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Reviewer: Lysbeth Bradley

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Gerritsen Beach School is a small neighborhood elementary school serving 430 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school is an integral part of the community and has taught successive generations from the same families. Most students live nearby. However, because the school has a spare classroom this year, a small number of special education students are taught in a self-contained kindergarten class and travel some distance to and from the school each day. The percentage of students with Title 1 eligibility matches that of similar schools, but is much lower than the City average.

The school population has 86% White students, with the remainder mostly Black and Hispanic. The ratio of boys to girls is greater than is found in other schools. The proportion of English language learners is very small and their first language varies from year to year. The school has fewer special education students than other schools, but the number of part-time participants is growing faster than other schools in the City.

The school works hard to promote good attendance and in 2005 it stood at 94%, which matches that of similar schools. The school benefits from stability of both staff and students.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal communicates her vision for the school with great clarity, leads by example and empowers her staff, students and parents to make decisions.
- The school operates as a large family where there is mutual trust and respect and where there are very high expectations of every member.
- The academic intervention team does excellent work in ensuring that no child falls behind.
- The students are fine ambassadors for their school; they strive hard to succeed, are willing to help each other in class and to take an active role in evaluating their own work.
- Teachers collaborate extremely well to refine the quality of the curriculum and assessment.
- The school is at the heart of the community, has established excellent communication with parents and caregivers, and makes valuable use of the area's natural resources.

What the school needs to improve

- Accelerate the progress of Black students and boys, through better use of data analysis in planning.
- Consider the most appropriate learning styles to enable boys to reach the same exceptionally high results as girls in English language arts.
- Ensure more students to achieve level 4 by placing a greater emphasis on evaluating the quality of students' learning.
- Make the process of goal setting even more rigorous by identifying very specific interim goals and by introducing a more formalized schedule to evaluate progress towards them.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a well-developed school.

In the three years since being appointed, the principal has worked in a very effective partnership with the assistant principal to build on the school's previous successes.

The principal sets the tone and has established a culture where there is no place for complacency, where every member of staff responds to her high expectations and where students are encouraged to soar. Teachers devote their energies to developing a curriculum that challenges and motivates students to play an active part in learning and in evaluating their own progress.

Teachers have raised the bar by developing clear and specific rubrics in every subject and students have risen to the challenge. Results have improved year on year. The school achieved very highly in English language arts in 2006 and the results are recognized as the best in Brooklyn. It has recently bettered these impressive results with 98% of its students, in each grade from 3 to 5, meeting or exceeding expectations in mathematics and more than half of both girls and boys exceeding in grade 4.

The school is also known as The School of Marine Biology. When she was the science teacher, the principal established the study of local marine life as a key part of the school's enriched curriculum. Students speak with enthusiasm about the opportunities the expanded science curriculum offers for in-depth study in school, off-site and on an overnight trip for grade 4 students. This focus for study makes excellent use of the area's natural resources and educates the students from an early age to develop their understanding of environmental issues and the impact of their actions on the natural world.

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 proficient.

The administration and faculty have a good understanding of how to analyze and disaggregate data to inform their planning for individual students, classes and cohorts. Because the use of data is well established, the administration and coaches have a good understanding of the objectivity and validity of the different tests that are used in school.

The school has gone a long way in establishing internal assessment procedures for a wide range of subjects that are standards-based and also promote continuity and progression in learning. The information derived from regular examination of a wide range of data is a key part of planning discussions in cabinet, grade meetings and the academic intervention team. Decisions made at these planning meetings ensure that almost all students make good progress and the school's results have improved year-on-year.

The school effectively uses data to track individual cohorts from year to year, to identify which classes make greater or less progress than expected and to tackle any weaknesses in organization, curriculum or instruction. However, the administration does not use the data to track the progress of different ethnic groups or of boys and girls.

There had been no action to close the gap between boys and girls even though the 2005 annual school report indicated that girls were more successful than boys in English language arts, mathematics and science. The administration is now alert to the situation and research is already underway to establish what changes the school can make to instructional practice and the curriculum to enable boys to succeed just as well as girls.

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.

There is very fruitful collaboration between all members of faculty, students and parents. The quality of discussion observed in the academic intervention team is second to none. This leads to high quality personal intervention plans that take account of each student’s interests, learning style and motivations. The school’s philosophy is they will do ‘whatever it takes’ to enable students to achieve their goals. Members of the team plan how best to overcome barriers to learning from their comprehensive knowledge and understanding of each student identified as needing additional support. The good, and at times very good, progress that these students make is testament to the thoroughness of the assessments and planned interventions, as well as the rigor of the regular evaluations and the fine-tuning that takes place at timely intervals.

Students are encouraged to play a full part in reflecting on and assessing their own work and that of their peers. Teachers take pains when marking work to assess it against rubrics that have been shared with the students. They indicate clearly where the strengths lie and also pinpoint what each student needs to work on next. Achievement levels have been broken down so that teachers can chart progress across a level as well as between levels. Students are motivated because their progress is more visible to them.

Parents know that they can contact the principal or any member of staff if they have concerns. These are dealt with rapidly and helpfully. Teachers do not wait until the end of a marking period to contact parents. This is much appreciated by parents who enjoy a genuine working partnership with their children’s teachers. Parents speak of ‘real consistency in both welcome and approach between teachers’.

The school has made changes in instructional methodologies to promote greater student involvement in their learning. The recent 2006 results show that the school has begun to close the gap between girls and boys in mathematics. This is attributed to an emphasis on practical work and regular use of a mathematics journal to prompt reflection and develop the confident use of mathematical language. The administration is now considering the most appropriate styles of learning to enable boys to reach the same exceptionally high achievement levels as girls in English language arts.

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 school has less leeway to organize its classes than larger schools, having only two classes in some grades and never more than three. Teachers collaborate extremely well to refine the quality of the curriculum and assessment so that instruction is adapted to meet different needs. Regular assessments of students' progress also enable movement between classes. The school recognizes that it can go even further in challenging its most able students, particularly in English language arts.

The school has very few English language learners. However, it is adept at using the limited resources at its disposal to devise individual programs of support that enable students who arrive with little or no English to make rapid progress. They are quickly assimilated into the most appropriate class.

Attendance is a problem for a small number of students. Excellent communication with parents on the first day of absence has led to a significant increase in attendance in the first month of the new school year, compared with September 2005, and looks set to continue.

Students enjoy coming to school because teachers find so many ways of explaining ideas in a meaningful way. As one student said: 'Hard work is actually fun'. They work hard in class and are very interested in joining extra curricular clubs and activities. They enjoy being actively involved in learning and understand the purpose of each activity. Students are perceptive when reflecting on what they have learned and how they can improve their work. They take the lead from the teachers in the way in which they collaborate with each other when working in groups. They are always prepared to help each other.

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.

This is a learning community where mutual trust and respect is manifest in actions both large and small. The principal is respected as an educational leader and communicates her vision for the school with great clarity. She has demonstrated how able she is at managing change. She has high expectations of what her staff can achieve and delegates responsibilities very effectively. As a direct consequence, members of staff gain a deeper understanding of management processes and develop the capacity for leadership. Through hard work, their efforts contribute significantly to the quality of teaching, learning and higher achievement. The principal also appreciates the importance of a good working environment and builds in sufficient time for the production of good quality work.

The administration has a very detailed understanding of the strengths and areas for development of each member of staff. This is developed through rigorous systems for monitoring and evaluating instruction. Most members of staff have more than one responsibility and fulfill them well, exchanging ideas and supporting each other. Professional development activities are closely aligned to the school's goals. Changes to instructional practice are evaluated in relation to students' progress. Detailed records

indicate that formal classroom observations make explicit links between teaching and learning. However, there is not always sufficient emphasis on what it is that enables students to make the best progress and what slows their leaning. The school is committed to ensuring that each of its students reaches their potential and acknowledges that this shift in emphasis from teaching to learning can provide further insights into how their most able learn best.

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.

Teachers speak warmly of the way in which the school 'runs like a well-oiled machine.' Procedures have been developed over time and are constantly evaluated to determine fitness for purpose. This enables the school to concentrate its efforts on establishing priorities to take it further forward and in setting goals focused on raising students' achievement. The school has well-established schedules and supportive pacing calendars. These help all those involved to plan their work in a measured way and to concentrate their efforts on enabling as many students as possible to reach their full potential.

The principal has promoted collaborative decision-making in many aspects of school life. This has been a particularly successful strategy for involving staff and parents in formulating the Comprehensive Education Plan. Those parents who are members of the school leadership team say they feel comfortable to express a different point of view. They attest to the good level of discussion that ensues before a decision is reached. The school makes good use of data to monitor progress and to evaluate its effectiveness. The principal has correctly identified that formalizing the schedules for evaluating the progress towards the school's goals would enable more staff to be involved.

Having recently received the test results for 2006, the school has a new challenge. It has far exceeded its long-term goal in mathematics for 2007, but has not yet used all the available data to set specific interim goals that are more relevant to students' current achievements. This development has the potential to involve coaches and teachers in evaluating the impact of their actions on students' progress in a more meaningful way and to raise achievement still further.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Gerritsen Beach School[PS 277]	∅	✓	+
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.	Ø	✓	+
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.	Ø	✓	+
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.	Ø	✓	+
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