



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Alejandrina Benitez De Gautier School

**Public School 377
200 Woodbine Street
Brooklyn
NY 11221**

Principal: Dominic Zagami

Dates of review: May 29 - 31, 2007

Reviewer: Corinne Brown

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Alejandrina Benitez De Gautier School is located in the Bushwick area of Brooklyn and serves a population of 836 students in kindergarten through 6th grade. The majority of students, approximately 78%, are Hispanic, which is higher than in similar and City schools. A further 20% of students are Black, approximately 1.5% are White and just over 1% are Asian. The remaining students are of American Indian or other backgrounds. In the student population approximately 20.6% are English language learners and 13% are special education students, both of which are higher than in similar and City schools. This is a Title 1 school, with a higher proportion of eligible students than in similar and City schools. Attendance averages 92%, which is slightly lower than in similar and City schools.

This year the school includes sixth grade for the first time. It will gradually expand to serve students in kindergarten through grade 8.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal has a positive outlook and determination to drive the school forward building upon school and staff strengths.
- The cabinet works collaboratively to improve student outcomes by harnessing expertise and enthusiasm in a shared vision.
- The dedicated staff show care and concern for their students.
- Data is used carefully to form instructional groupings.
- Students identified as in greatest need are targeted for particular attention.
- Students feel respected in the school and able to talk about personal and academic issues with trusted adults.
- The celebration of student work is prominent, colorful and sets expectations of performance.
- The climate for learning is generally reflected in classrooms through clear guidelines for success and leveled books, in keeping with the Teachers' College model.
- The school makes considered budget and staffing decisions to maintain smaller class sizes, which improves student outcomes.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure consistency of practice in classroom and behavior management across the school in order to maximize learning opportunities.
- Deepen data analysis to enable planning for differing needs as revealed by such analysis in order to improve outcomes.
- Strengthen parental involvement and communication to further promote positive interaction.
- Refine whole school and other planning to include interim evaluation indicators and associated timelines.
- Explore strategies to improve and maintain student attendance.
- Ensure consistency of assessment recording across the school to aid cohesion and continuity in planning and monitoring short and long-term progress.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

As it expands to serve kindergarten through grade 8, the Alejandrina Benitez De Gautier School is working diligently to meet the challenge of providing for the wide range of learning levels in its diverse population. It utilizes the expertise and resources it has, hones skills and builds capacity to establish consistency of quality instruction for all students. Through an increasingly reflective culture, the school is active on many fronts simultaneously to drive the school forward and improve student outcomes. It uses data to inform decision making at all levels and inform planning. The school seeks to develop technology in order to become more sophisticated in analysis and to enhance learning opportunities. The school is continually mindful of the needs of its community and seeks to involve parents regularly in the learning partnership.

The principal is in his second year at the school. He shows sensitivity in interpersonal relations, a real care for students and determination through collaborative effort to make a positive difference in the lives of students and widen their horizons. He has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and is actively tackling the latter.

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 school places considerable emphasis on the utilization of data to understand performance and so gathers a wide variety of both hard and soft data. It is developing its practice as a school that uses data to inform instruction, so professional meetings and conversations reference data which informs planning and evaluation. Progress in literacy is measured for each student, class and grade level using State and City test results, Princeton Review, Grow reports, the Early Childhood Literacy Assessment System, Developmental Reading Assessment in conjunction with teacher conference notes and student work. The Everyday Math and Impact Math programs have inbuilt end of unit tests and other assessments which provide the main means of assessment within school as well as State and City tests results. Science and social studies progress is currently assessed mainly through the mandatory tests at required grade levels, as well as teacher assessment. The school is planning to develop in house uniform assessments for these areas. It is also looking to use technology to streamline the analysis of progress across the years, as data is currently held in different binders.

The school scrutinizes data from El Examen de Lectura en Español, New York State English as a Second Language Test, breakdowns from standardized test results and some in-house data to understand progress of English language learners, ethnic groups and special education students within its student population. It also considers the impact of social conditions as reflected in standardized test results. Although the school uses a

spreadsheet to look at English language learners as individuals, it does not, as yet deepen analysis and identify subgroups within its large Hispanic population, for example. The differences in performance between males and females are noted and are beginning to be addressed by the school. The performance of different ability groups, including higher achievers, informs the school's considered decision to form heterogeneous class groups.

The school compares itself and its progress with other schools in the neighborhood that have similar populations, are using the same programs and have similar vision. It compares its own progress year by year in different content areas and seeks to improve performance by sharing strategies that have proved effective in raising achievement.

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 cabinet is the guiding force in decision making and whole school planning. The Comprehensive Education Plan had to be developed last year without the full involvement of the school leadership team, as parental representation was inconsistent. It does contain goals based on data to improve student outcomes, but does not set out interim evaluation points. The school informally monitors its performance on a continual basis and is beginning to develop more formal monitoring within its whole school and other plans. It is developing its ability to use data to evaluate the impact of instruction and interventions and so formulate new goals and plans to accelerate desired improvements for grades, classes and individual students.

Through analysis of data the school has rightly identified literacy as the main priority across the school, but with particular emphasis for certain identified groups, such as Hispanic boys. Analytic review of student data also enables more timely targeted academic intervention service provision and planning for the upcoming year. Earlier intervention is planned as a result of examining the impact of current provision. Technology is increasingly used to personalize interventions which also motivate students. Data is used to form instructional groupings as the school strives to meet the needs of its various groups. It recognizes, for example, that interrupted formal education for some students provides greater challenge, particularly within the English language learner and bilingual population, so is actively planning to compensate for this. Students at risk of promotion are identified and parental support is sought to complement the academic intervention programs the school provides. Grade team meetings provide regular scheduled opportunities for teachers to share information, plan and set goals.

The school is working to share high expectations and so celebrates student work through prominent, colorful displays and award ceremonies. It communicates with parents through formal meetings and report cards, as well as personal contact when possible. The school recognizes the need to strengthen positive interaction with parents and the wider community and so promote greater involvement in the learning partnership.

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 implements the mandated curriculum in mathematics through its use of Everyday Math and Impact Math. It has re-established its relationship with Teachers’ College to implement balanced literacy across the school as it is a more interactive program. The school is working to incorporate literacy across the curriculum, with emphasis on the writers’ process, and has a focus on science and social studies for further development. Enrichment activities such as art and music means students have wider opportunities for success. The majority of content areas indicate clear guidelines for success, with charts, leveled books and other artifacts that contribute to a consistent climate for learning.

Teachers are dedicated and feel accountable for the students in their care. The extent of differentiated instruction is variable and, where it is practiced, is mainly through student groupings for different skills, rather than by different targeted activities and tasks. Teacher skills in data gathering, analysis and utilization are equally varied. There is teamwork and the sharing of good practice evident among many staff, which is especially important for the significant number of teachers who are new to the building. The school is actively working to ensure consistency of practice in classroom and behavior management across the school in order to inject greater instructional rigor and so increase student engagement and improve outcomes.

Despite a significant cut in its expected budget this year, the school makes careful budgetary and staffing decisions to maintain smaller class sizes. This means more individual attention for students both personally and academically. The development of a teachers’ literacy resource room to support the implementation of the Teachers’ College program indicates another considered use of finances. Scheduling arrangements are similarly carefully thought through.

Students feel respected in the school and able to talk about personal and academic issues with trusted adults. They generally enjoy school and are engaged in learning when the quality of instruction is good. Teachers obviously care about students. The school is developing increased student involvement through initiatives such as a student government and student reflection. Attendance is acceptable but the school recognizes the need to explore strategies to improve and maintain this in order to improve outcomes for individual students and the school.

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 proficient.

The school actively seeks to build capacity by utilizing strengths to complement existing expertise. As such it seeks to appoint staff with secure content knowledge and a collegial approach, so that collaborative practice is enhanced. The school has hired, for example, an additional assistant principal from within the staff with particular skills in literacy development.

Professional development is highlighted as particularly important at this time in the school's expansion. The overall school professional development plan is appropriately adjusted to accommodate teacher developmental levels and so provide differentiated opportunities when possible. 'Lunch and learns' supplement regular and frequent scheduled professional development time focused on whole school priorities. Monthly external professional development is assigned based on need as are inter-classroom visitations. Observations from the walkthroughs conducted by the assistant principals and the principal ensure that professional development is appropriately targeted. Common preparation time for grade level teachers and administrators is an ongoing forum for informal professional development, planning and sharing. Other team meetings such as monthly grade conferences, cross grade sessions and academic intervention team meetings provide further opportunity for mutual support.

The well-respected principal visits classes on a daily basis and knows the staff well. He has a positive, unswerving outlook, and is determinedly driving the school forward by understanding and building upon school and staff strengths. He demonstrates very good capacity to secure further change. He consults at weekly cabinet meetings and assigns responsibilities so that administration works collaboratively to improve student outcomes by harnessing expertise and enthusiasm in a shared vision. As a result the school generally runs well through a common understanding of procedures.

The school has several partnerships with community based organizations that support student academic and personal development effectively. For example, The Coalition for Hispanic Family Services runs free after school and vacation programs that are open to anyone and include family counseling opportunities.

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.

This school is now continually working reflectively to refine its practice and so improve performance. The Comprehensive Education Plan and principal's performance review are well aligned and based on analysis of school performance data. The school intends to build in interim evaluation indicators and associated timelines in all future planning, as currently detailed in the new literacy strategy document. It evaluates its progress against previous annual and periodic data, and in comparison with other schools, in order to make any necessary interim adjustments to the curriculum. Realignments are made during the year in response to identified changes in patterns of performance by student groups. Instructional meetings, for example, are used to discuss goals and alternative plans to remedy situations in need of improvement. As yet monitoring processes are not fully formalized or documented, but this is part of an ongoing whole school initiative to generally tighten procedures and practice across the school.

This school recognizes it has come a long way in providing cohesion and quality in instructional practice, but that it still has room to develop further. It is working more collaboratively to offer a consistent approach in classrooms and around the school and to deepen the relationship with parents in the common aim of improving student outcomes.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Alejandrina Benitez De Gautier School (PS 377)	∅	✓	+
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	