



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



# **Quality Review Report**

**Bergen Upper School**

**Middle School 571**

**80 Underhill Avenue  
Brooklyn  
NY 11238**

**Principal: Marissa Burson-Flateau**

**Dates of review: April 19 – 20, 2007**

**Reviewer: Mary Ayala**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The Bergen Upper School is located on the second floor of Public School 307 in the Prospect Heights neighborhood of Brooklyn and serves 280 students in grades 6 through 8. The student body is primarily Black (79.5%) and Hispanic (12.2%). Remaining populations include Asian/Other (3.95%) and Caucasian (1.8%).

Compared to other City schools, a large percentage of students (20.5%) receive special education services, while a much smaller number receive support as English language learners. Eligible Title 1 students constitute 69% of the overall population. This proportion is slightly less than similar schools but very close to all City schools.

A challenge for this school is the high number of new staff. The principal and assistant principal, as well as a significant number of teachers, have only been at the school this school year.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal and assistant principal are well-respected for the positive changes they have instituted at the school.
- The principal and assistant principal provide excellent feedback to teachers in order to improve classroom practices.
- High expectations are well communicated to staff and students alike.
- Students are provided with a variety of ways to accelerate their learning.
- Mathematics teachers are using collaboration well to improve classroom practices.
- Well-defined policies and procedures make it possible for the school to maintain a sharp focus on academic achievement.
- Good quality professional development is available on-site.
- Parents appreciate the accessibility to staff that makes it possible for them to partner in order to improve their children's performance.

### What the school needs to improve

- Develop comprehensive student profiles so that progress can be more adequately monitored and compared within and across classrooms.
- Communicate a limited number of key goals to all members of the school community.
- Use outside partnerships to achieve academic goals.
- Deepen teachers' understanding of differentiation so that students can more fully master the curriculum and demonstrate competence in a variety of ways.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This is a proficient school.**

The Bergen Upper School, currently in its third year of operation, has made good progress in developing a Comprehensive Education Plan that helps students develop their interests and prepare well for a positive high-school experience. The principal and assistant principal share a vision for excellence and are energetic in supporting students, and a large number of new staff alike, to grow as learners. Parents appreciate the attention and accommodation they receive from staff.

The school is well maintained and attractively decorated with displays of student work, pictures of special events, and student awards. Students are able to take advantage of a strong arts program that includes visual and music appreciation classes and after school instruction in strings and piano. Students appreciate the principal's efforts to give them a voice through Town Hall and morning meetings.

The school is making good progress in gathering a variety of data and using it to plan for improved academic achievement. Goals and plans are effectively communicated to most members of the school community so that everyone can become involved with improvement. Considerable effort is focused on giving students opportunities to improve their knowledge and skills. In addition, teachers take good advantage of on-site professional development opportunities. The principal and assistant principal's background in staff development, in addition to direction provided by coaches and consultants, support teachers in their growth as practitioners.

### 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**

Staff at this school understands well the importance of gathering a variety of information about student performance so they can recognize how well every student is progressing. Consequently, they use a cycle of data gathering that includes information from standardized tests, customized periodic assessments, pre- and post-tests in content areas, and practice tests. As a result, strategic decisions about what to teach and how to teach it are made with an assurance that next steps are based on objective performance information.

The school does a good job looking at data in order to fully understand the progress of individual students, classes, and grades. Staff also understand the importance of looking at the performance of specific ethnic groups, English language learners, and special education students in order to monitor their progress as well. Student profiles currently contain a variety of data about performance in English language arts and mathematics.

However, the profiles are not truly comprehensive because there is no information about performance in science and social studies.

The school also uses its data strategically to identify a considerable number of students who are repeating grades for a variety of reasons. As a result, more focused support and monitoring have been put in place on their behalf.

The school understands well the benefit derived from using comparisons as a measure of progress. However, those comparisons are primarily limited to work done in grades and in English language arts and mathematics classes. The school plans to expand that work to include comparing all subject areas, as well as overall performance, with that of similar middle schools. As the school is now completing its third year, staff are also aware that they now have sufficient standardized test data to more precisely identify areas in need of improvement.

**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 uses data well to set goals and plan for improved academic performance. Goals that contribute to the school’s overall plan for improvement are collaboratively discussed and agreed upon in grade level and content area meetings. These goals are then used strategically to guide the design of lessons and units of study. Adjustments are made when periodic assessments reveal that students do not understand the material.

The school does a good job defining specific academic goals for students, classes, and grades, most precisely in English language arts and mathematics. That work is also expanding to social studies and science classes. For example, one science teacher is currently developing rubrics that help students more fully understand what quality work looks like.

The school pays good attention to helping students in greatest need of improvement. This includes English language learners, special education students, and students who are repeating a grade. They receive a variety of academic supports that include extra instruction before, during, and after school. In class, they benefit from working in small groups and conferencing with teachers.

High expectations are well communicated to staff, students, and parents alike. Parents feel that they are solicited as partners to support their children’s success. They receive phone calls, mailings, and flyers to keep them well informed of how to stay involved. Teachers make good efforts to help all students become more proficient as learners. As one student stated, “The teacher pushes me as if I’m her own child.”

Although the school has goals for students, classes, and grades, it does not currently identify key goals that engage the efforts of all members of the school community. For example, there are discussions about the value of using portfolios, but there is no goal to move the practice from idea to full implementation. The principal shares her vision of good instruction for all primarily with staff and students, but less so with parents.

**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 has made good decisions about curriculum selection, based on criteria that are meant to accelerate student progress. Programs are selected if they can provide meaningful feedback about what students understand and if they can provide different ways for students to master skills. The principal looks for ease of use in teachers’ manuals and also seeks out recommendations from the regional office.

Teachers at this school know that their efforts are critical to the success of students. They are held accountable for improving instruction and subsequently student outcomes. To that end, they use data to determine what they should teach and to determine how well students are progressing. The use of data is not sufficiently extended as a basis for differentiating classroom instruction.

The principal has used resources well to advance a vision of improving instruction for all students. Decisions about current and future schedules are based on how best to meet student needs and staff are used strategically to impact on student performance. Staff know that the principal wants to make sure that they have everything they need in order to provide the best possible instructional program. Additional computers and smart boards have been purchased so that technology can be used more strategically to improve teaching and learning. In those classrooms observed, students were actively engaged in learning and were taking advantage of many resources including, but not limited to, computers and extensive print collections. In addition, classes were well attended; a direct result of the school’s numerous efforts to improve daily student attendance.

The personal and academic needs of students at this school are given good attention. The school’s small size contributes to a sense of family. As a result, students appreciate that there is at least one adult, if not many, whom they know and trust. As one student commented, “The smallest problem is taken seriously.”

**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.**

With guidance from the leadership team, staff are becoming increasingly skilled in their use of data to set goals and make decisions about teaching and learning. New staff is quickly introduced to high expectations, routines for looking at data and methodologies to compare outcomes across classes and grades. As a result, there is good focus as to what next steps are needed in order to accelerate student learning.

A variety of professional development opportunities are used to good advantage to help staff use data productively. As data is used to identify what needs to be taught, teachers are then able to work with coaches, consultants, and their peers in order to build their repertoire of good teaching practices. The principal and assistant principal are also excellent sources of professional development as they visit classrooms frequently and provide quality feedback in individual conferences and grade-level meetings. In addition,

they frequently lead workshops based on their knowledge of the English language arts and mathematics curriculum.

The school is using planning in teams to good effect, particularly with regard to mathematics. All mathematics teachers participate in a cycle of planning, implementing, and revising lessons that allows for candid discussions about what works and what does not. The school plans to extend this pattern to English language arts teachers for the coming year.

The principal and assistant principal have only been in place since last July. In a short time, they have done excellent work in establishing a culture of high expectations and putting routines and procedures in place that ensure the school runs smoothly. As one parent noted, "Problems are addressed quickly." Teachers also confirmed that the principal and assistant principal are well-respected for their instructional expertise and for the positive changes they have instituted to improve student performance.

The school has made good progress in putting supports in place to address students in crisis. In addition, they have developed a number of partnerships that provide for after-school enrichment activities in art and music. They have begun to look at some partnerships that can support their academic goals but these are, as yet, not in place.

**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 acted strategically to put a number of practices in place to evaluate each student's progress in a timely fashion. Pre- and post-tests and frequent interim assessments are used thoughtfully in English language arts and mathematics in order to closely monitor student performance. In addition, assessment checkpoints are being introduced in science classes. Although a variety of assessments are used to monitor for progress, the school does not adequately use the practice of looking at student work and portfolio collections as ways to monitor and compare student progress within and across classrooms.

The school has done well to keep students informed of their progress or lack thereof. Alert notices and progress reports are sent at the mid-point of every marking period so that parents and students can plan together for improvements.

When information from periodic assessment and other diagnostics measures are considered, the school suitably adjusts its instructional practices. Units of study are revised and different strategies are tried in an attempt to secure better outcomes. These changes are made quickly so that the next cycle of assessments can adequately measure the success of adjusted goals and plans.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: Bergen Upper School (MS 571)</b>	∅	✓	+
<b>Quality Score</b>		X	

<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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• each student, classroom, grade level,</li> </ul>		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"> <li>• ethnic groups, English language learners, special education students*</li> </ul>		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"> <li>• all other categories of interest to the school*</li> </ul>		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		
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>		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.

<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.		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		
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>		X	

<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	