

**Benjamin Banneker Academy For Community Development**

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Development**

**77 Clinton Avenue  
Brooklyn  
NY, 11205**

**Principal: Mr. Daryl Rock**

**Dates of review: May 11 – 12, 2006**

**Reviewer: Mrs. Pat Cox  
Cambridge Education**

# **Benjamin Banneker Academy For Community Development**

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## **Part 1: The School Context**

### **Information about the school**

This small academy has 913 students from grades 9 to 12 and it is part of the Autonomy Zone. It was founded in 1994 and has grown over the years since then. The school is very popular and selects its students on the basis of their attitudes and desire to do well. The students' skills are generally above the average for their age when they enter grade 9. About 55 percent of the students are girls.

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## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal leads the school well and works very closely with the assistant principals, who are well-organized and give good support. There is a culture of high expectations.
- There is a strong commitment to community service. Therefore the students have wide experience of making a contribution and taking responsibility.
- Most of the teaching is good, so that the students progress well through the school and examination pass and graduation rates are high. Many students are on the honor roll.
- The school is a warm family environment where all care for and support each other. The teachers work very hard to support their students and ensure that they have every opportunity to do well. All students have at least one adult they can confide in and share their concerns.
- The school makes regular assessments of the standards the students reach. It uses these well to ensure that the students know how well they are doing and to put in successful intervention programs for those who are in danger of failing.
- The students behave well around school and in lessons, with a good attitude to their work and learning. The school is an orderly and purposeful place.
- The school is a reflective organization that monitors its own work continuously and makes frequent adjustments to its programs in the light of those evaluations.
- There is an interesting and varied curriculum and links with a wide range of organizations. This gives students increasing choice and experience of the world of work.
- Teachers are keen to improve their own expertise. They work regularly with each other to develop their teaching methods and cross-curricular strategies.
- The school works closely with the parents of its students and keeps them well-informed about their children's progress.

### What the school needs to improve

- Continue and refine the work to improve teaching so that there are more opportunities for teachers to share and develop the best practice, and all instruction matches the school's high expectations.
- Develop and build on the strategies being used to improve the students' attendance and punctuality.
- Extend the work already being done on the use of data and informal assessments, so that the teachers use this information more consistently to plan their lessons and courses.
- Structure and align the English language arts curriculum more carefully so that there is a clear progression for students through the school.
- Review the planning of lab scheduling and chemistry scope and sequence and monitor the progress made, so that they are more effective.
- Continue to develop the partnership the school has within the community in order to provide even more opportunities and choices for the students to learn through the important contributions they make.
- Extend the many opportunities already provided for students to attend advanced classes and placements.

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- Build on the informal use of peer tutoring and mentoring to make these a consistent part of school life.
- Improve the communication with parents so that all have immediate access to the increasing amounts of information the school holds about their children.
- Build on the work being done to improve the progress being made by the boys.

### Part 3: Main Findings

#### Overall Evaluation

**This is a well-developed school where much of the instruction is good and the staff carefully monitors the progress made by the students.**

**How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria.**

**Quality Statement 1: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor and facilitate the student's progress over time.**

**This area of the school's work is well-developed overall.**

Objectives are set out for mastery, and students are made aware of the success criteria. The results are discussed with them to keep their focus on reaching the expected standards. Teachers monitor their work through each topic, assignment, homework and project and often keep the results at the forefront of their planning. Many use the information to adjust the content of their instruction, although this good practice is not totally consistent through the school. The staff scrutinizes the test results and other assessment data six times a year, using the report cards which build up a picture of progress.

The grade analysis is a key assessment, used to identify and support those who are in danger of falling behind or have achieved the standards early. The teachers who counsel groups of students monitor their grades very closely and provide them with advice and support. The school does not analyze the results by gender or ethnic group, but knows that the girls do better than the boys. The information is used appropriately to put in interventions, in order to support and challenge. The achievements of the many who gain high grades, particularly with overall averages of over 90 percent, are celebrated and rewarded.

**Quality Statement 2: 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 are successful systems to use data for identifying what each student needs to do and to plan interventions to fill any gaps in learning. The school carries out a baseline test when students are first admitted and uses their results from previous schools to measure how much value the school is adding. Students are involved well in the system. Each assignment has a rubric and the students therefore know how that assignment will be assessed. Teachers sometimes ask them to grade their own work or that of others. Students and their parents have access to the grade books on the school's website,

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although this system has not been developed sufficiently to allow access for all. The school sets demanding goals for cohorts of students at the end of each grade, rather than for individuals. There are appropriate systems to share these goals with students and their parents at the beginning of the year.

The school monitors progress well and uses the results to accelerate learning. There are well developed strategies to support those who are slipping behind, sometimes after school. Many students do work after school, even those who do not need to.

Each of the four assistant principals has a group of students who are not doing well; they monitor the progress being made and set up specific and mainly effective intervention programs. It is mandatory for them to attend Saturday classes to work on the weaknesses in their skills. The school holds a 12 hour class on one Saturday before the tests so that they can prepare themselves for the tests. This is a family day which parents attend. Systems also work well for other groups. The students who have reached mastery early are moved on to a harder class and others have internships or placements in colleges or organizations so that they can continue to advance. However, the school has identified that there are fewer of these opportunities than are necessary. There are mentoring groups for boys in order to improve their performance, but the school has not monitored the impact of this measure.

There are well-developed systems for planning to achieve the students' goals. Each department develops plans for accelerating learning, sometimes discussing individual students who are in danger of failing a course. The school has amended the program for global history, covering the two-year program in one year but in the depth required. In order to further these developments, there are plans for block programming to use time more effectively and efficiently. Attendance is monitored closely through the CASS system, which allows the students to swipe their ID card. Many strategies used to encourage students to be regular and punctual. There is an efficient system for intervention and contact with parents, including the system for sending letters. However, there is still a problem with tardiness and in some cases poor school attendance.

**Quality Statement 3: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.**

**This area of the school's work is well-developed.**

The school has well-developed systems for continually monitoring the programs and changing them where necessary. For example, the methods in use for science labs this year have been found to be insufficiently effective because too few students attend. Therefore the school has devised suitable plans to ensure that the students do not miss this vital part of the curriculum. There is regular itemized analysis of test results, assessments, assignments and homework to see where the gaps are in their learning, and this informs the instructional program. Staff is allocated to those specific courses where the school judges that they will help the students enough.

There are well-developed systems for using assessments and test data to identify classes where pass rates are not as high and to challenge teachers about their performance. The principal monitors teaching on a formal basis regularly and informally almost daily. There is a well-developed knowledge of the quality of teaching and the ways in which it can be improved.

The scope and sequence are mostly well-developed so that courses are aligned to build progressively on the students' skills. Staff works closely together to plan their courses

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across the curriculum so that skills taught in one course are reinforced in others. However, the English language arts curriculum is not structured well enough and the school is at an early stage in planning to align it. From its foundation as a community based organization, the school uses the community well to develop courses and strong links. For the older students there is a widening choice of courses, including pre-medical, engineering, media and humanities programs. The students are expected to complete 100 hours community service and join in other projects, as their contribution to the community. There are annual visits to countries in Africa and South America to extend the students' awareness and understanding of other cultures. The school is actively exploring further ways of improving these links and opportunities.

The school has developed an informal system of peer mentoring and tutoring that is proving valuable in supporting students in improving their behavior, confidence and learning. However, it is not yet an embedded part of school life. Nevertheless, as a consequence of the trust the school places in them, the varied and interesting programs and the good teaching, the students behave well and have a good attitude to their work. They take responsibility well in class and around school and are thoughtful about their own learning. The school is an orderly place. Because the teachers give freely of their time to support the students and make sure that they do as well as possible, there are good relationships. The school has a warm family culture where students say there are many adults they trust and can confide in.

**Quality Statement 4: 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 overall.**

The school selects its teachers according to their alignment with its culture, high expectations and teaching ability. The use of data is proficient; teachers collect data regularly and most use the computer program 'My Grade Book' to record the grades each student receives in each class. Many use these assessments on a day-to-day basis to plan work for the range of skills in their room. However, this is not aligned and some are not yet confident or proficient in using it to differentiate work.

There are well-developed strategies for professional development. New teachers are paired with a buddy who will help them improve their teaching. There are faculty meetings to discuss general points for development and teachers receive individual reports on their instruction. There are study groups in the faculties, where a topic will be introduced and its implementation will be monitored through the school. The assistant principals' support and advice teachers to improve their practice and most teachers regularly sit in each others' classes to develop their instructional strategies. Teachers sometimes visit other schools to see instructional techniques in operation. Consultants have been brought in, for example to support with developments in history, music and writing in order to develop teaching when there are key priorities. Points for improvement are followed up in order to check that support has been effective. All who teach an advanced class attends a specific course to refine their instruction. As a consequence, most of the teaching is well-developed, although there is some that is still in need of improvement.

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**Quality Statement 5: 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.**

The school has careful plans for improving its instruction and uses the detailed data it holds to measure the success of those plans. Leadership of the school is well-developed and committed to high expectations of work and behavior. It is reflective and continually monitors its own development and rapidly changes work that it not sufficiently effective. The 'cabinet', consisting of principal and assistant principals meet regularly with each department for a summit meeting and consider that subject's plan for improvement. Regular practice tests measure the students' progress and inform the school of areas where improvement is needed, so that plans can be adapted.

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## Part 4: Evaluation Criteria Grade Summary

<b>Quality Statement 1: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor and facilitate the student's progress over time.</b>	o	✓	+
<p>1.1 The school uses available data (e.g., diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments, students work products, standards-based portfolios, attendance, descriptive review, security data, etc.) and generates its own to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of how well each student, classroom, grade level, and other important categories of students and the school are:</p> <p>(1) currently performing, and                      (2) progressing over time,                      on English Language Arts, mathematics, and other important academic subjects.</p> <p>Criteria for measuring student progress are “objective” when they are</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• standards-based,</li> <li>• consistent across students,</li> <li>• capable of revealing progress or a lack of it over time and ways to close the gap between current and expected practice,</li> </ul> <p>and when they allow</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the performance of different students to be compared, and</li> <li>• learning activity to be broken down into component parts so strengths and weaknesses on each sub-activity may be identified.</li> </ul>			<b>X</b>
<p>1.2 The school makes effective use of the data to assess the performance and progress of students by racial and ethnic groups, English Language Learners and special education students, and all other categories of interest to the school.</p> <p>{This criterion and the next are partially aspirational as of now. City and State Report Cards and Division of Accountability and Assessment reports provide only some of the necessary data. The NYC DOE will soon provide schools with fuller access to better data.}</p>		<b>X</b>	
<p>1.3 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, racial and ethnic groups, and other groupings of interest within the school.</p>			<b>X</b>
<b>Quality Statement 2: 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>	o	✓	+
<p>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 it develops plans and timeframes for reaching those goals.</p>			<b>X</b>
<p>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 warranting attention.</p>		<b>X</b>	
<p>2.3 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.</p>			<b>X</b>
<p>2.4 High expectations are conveyed to students and parents. Students and their parents/caregivers are regularly invited to provide information about each student's performance and how to improve. That information is central to setting reasonably challenging goals and developing, evaluating, and revising plans.</p>			<b>X</b>
<p>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</p>			<b>X</b>

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<b>Quality Statement 3: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.</b>	<b>o</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</b>
3.1 The school selects the curriculum based on how well it aligns with the school's high expectations and improvement plans and on the curriculum's capacity to generate meaningful interim data about progress towards goals.			<b>X</b>
3.2 Decisions about the use of teacher and student time are based on the organization of the day and week needed to inform teachers about each student's performance and next learning steps, set goals and plans for improved student learning, and implement and continuously improve plans for reaching stated goals.			<b>X</b>
3.3 Staffing decisions are driven by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes.			<b>X</b>
3.4 Budgeting decisions are driven by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes.			<b>X</b>
3.5 Teachers are accountable for student outcomes. 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.			<b>X</b>
3.6 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.		<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
3.7 Student attendance and engagement are high priorities. High rates and patterns of absences trigger immediate intervention.		<b>X</b>	
3.8 Instructional programs actively engage students.			<b>X</b>
3.9 The school aligns youth development and support services around stated academic goals. Partnerships with outside bodies are routinely used to achieve academic goals.			<b>X</b>

<b>Quality Statement 4: 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>	<b>0</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</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.		<b>X</b>	
4.2 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.			<b>X</b>
4.3 Leaders, faculty, and staff share the same goals and frequently evaluate themselves, their interventions and each other's plans and interventions, including, when possible, by comparing outcomes across classrooms and schools. The school monitors its performance and tackles weaknesses. Even in areas where the school is successful, leadership is not complacent, but aims to improve further. The goal in all cases is to improve student and school performance and progress.			<b>X</b>
4.4 Planning, evaluation of results and revision of plans takes place in teams.			<b>X</b>
4.5 The principal is respected and has capacity to effect change.			<b>X</b>
4.6 The school runs smoothly. Procedures are clear and are generally followed.			<b>X</b>

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Quality Statement 5: 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.	o	✓	+
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 reaching stated goals.			<b>X</b>
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.			<b>X</b>
5.3 Information generated by interim 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.			<b>X</b>
5.4 Each plan's interim and final outcomes drive each successive phase of goal setting and improvement planning, and each successive phase is characterized by agile and flexible realignment of practices and resources to improve students' academic outcomes.			<b>X</b>