



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Benjamin Altman

Public School 42

**71 Hester Street
New York
NY 10002**

Principal: Rosa Casiello-O'Day

Dates of review: January 18 – 19 & 22, 2007

Reviewer: Denis Pittman

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Public School 42 is located in a historical section of the lower East side of Manhattan. The school opened in 1898 and is a community landmark. About 90% of the school's enrolment of 711 students is comprised of dependent families, almost half of the students are English language learners on various levels, and almost all come from homes where English is not spoken. The ethnic composition of the school is Asian 90.5%, Hispanic 6.5%, Black 2.7% and White 0.5%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding. Attendance levels, at around 97%, are significantly above that of similar and City schools.

The school is a very stable community in which members feel invested. Many teachers and the assistant principal are former students and some continue to live in the neighborhood. Many families have been enrolled from more than one generation.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal provides excellent leadership and support for teachers and students.
- Given the low standards of English language acquisition, in their earlier years, students consistently achieve very well and standards are high.
- All teachers systematically collect a wide range of data which they analyze rigorously to ensure the sustained progress of individual students.
- There is a strong sense of unity and collegiality among the staff, all of whom are committed to the school's success.
- Teaching is stimulating and engaging so that learning is enjoyable and memorable.
- As a school with a nurturing and family atmosphere, it cares for all the students very well.
- There is a wide range of enrichment activities which provides an all round development of students
- Staff support for one another is outstanding and is central to the sustained achievement seen throughout the school.
- Data on students' performance is exceptionally well used in decision making at all levels.
- The school has a very good relationship with parents, who are actively involved in their children's learning.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop teachers' knowledge and understanding of technology and integrate it into the curriculum to further increase student motivation and build their skills.
- Continue to develop approaches to differentiated instructional programs which also reflect the interests of students.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a well-developed school.

This is an outstanding school. The school gives students an excellent start to their education. It is a warm, humane 'family' of learners and ambitious staff that strive to ensure that the school and every individual child flourish. All students are encouraged to do their very best so that they are equipped to take advantage of the opportunities that life will offer them academically, socially or emotionally. Everyone around the school is committed to giving of their best. Teachers use data very well and are continually striving to present lively, interesting lessons where students are actively involved in their own learning. Students and teachers have high expectations of themselves. Students achieve very well given the challenging circumstances they face on entry to the school. Achievement is high and results are consistently better than similar schools. The curriculum is innovative and reflects the specialized language needs of students where necessary. All adults and students enjoy being together; this positive rapport is one of the significant strengths of the school. Parents are regularly informed and consulted about their child's education and are encouraged to be actively involved in the running of the school. They are very appreciative of the exceptional way in which their children are cared for.

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

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.

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

The school regularly collects a wide range of information gained from assessments and tests which provide teachers with detailed data on the performance and progress of each student. The school uses a variety of tests to provide benchmarking data for the lower and higher grades. The detail of these assessments enables the school to begin its program of instruction with a degree of confidence as to the correct starting points for individual students. The school is particularly successful in its early diagnosis of the specific needs of English language learners. The commitment to bi-lingual classes in Chinese is an outcome of this diagnosis. The programs provided are successful in scaffolding the language experience for these students. In the general education program, teachers know their students very well and consistently use the data collected so that all teachers provide very well for students of all abilities. Teachers use a combination of both teacher-made assessments and checklists along with established City and State assessments. The staff constantly assess progress and revise goals and plans in response to new information. The school has a clear policy to be particularly stringent in its analysis of those students who may require special education. A significant amount of diagnostic analysis is conducted before an individual is put onto a special need program. Once that decision is made, the range of intervention strategies is comprehensive and rigorous.

The school is constantly evaluating its performance in relation to past outcomes. It uses the detail of standardized tests to identify specific items which need to be focused on within respective grade levels. Given the unique ethnic composition of the school, any direct comparisons with similar schools is not contextually possible although the school is clearly aware of its overall performance against State and City expectations.

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.

The schools’ use of a wide range of assessment information is instrumental in facilitating the setting of whole-school goals and in ensuring that students make good progress, particularly in the acquisition of language and literacy skills. For example, the use of in-depth studies has resulted in an observable growth in the quality of talk, writing and enhanced knowledge in the subject content areas. The school has been proactive in its commitment to develop its assessment procedures. Teachers are accurate in their grading of students’ work and in helping students to know and understand what they are doing well and what they need to do in order to improve.

Regular staff meetings, where all participants share and air their views constructively, are a major strength of this school. These meetings are highly focused with a clear purpose of setting high goals for improving teaching practice and ensuring that all students are set work which challenges them to do their very best. Staff also regularly gather together to reflect upon the suitability and appropriateness of the next learning step for individual students and refine their planning accordingly. The sharing of such expertise ensures that teachers’ planning is well matched to the needs of all students. Students having difficulties are quickly identified, resulting in a variety of intervention strategies. For example the reading recovery program is very effective in supporting individual students and providing strategies for improvement in their confidence. If a referral for special education is finally thought to be appropriate then the different intervention services work together and share information extremely well. This ensures a co-ordinated approach for students and their families.

Expectations for all students are very high and these are shared with students and their parents who are actively involved in discussions about progress. The student’s progress towards individual learning targets is regularly tracked and new challenges are then set which ensure that all students make good progress in their learning.

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 degree to which instruction is planned and modified according to the needs of students is impressive. For example, a team of teachers, in association with others from four different schools, is involved in the design of a year-long reading and writing curriculum for English language learners. A variety of models of instruction are being used. Rather than following the lesson units designed by others the teachers collaborate

to design their own units based on their ongoing assessment and their careful knowledge and observation of their students. This is curriculum modification and development in practice. Through this type of professional development teachers show their willingness to be accountable for improving instruction. Teachers readily describe their accountability for students' learning and exemplify the good range of information that they use to inform their work. Teachers' collaborative approaches, for example, in curriculum mapping exercises within grades, ensure the alignment of instruction with the necessary skills and concepts. The school's instructional programs are firmly based on high expectations of students and a constant review of their progress. The school recognizes the need to continue to develop the use of technology in lessons and keep the principles of differentiated instruction at the forefront of their curriculum planning.

The commitment of the staff extends beyond the formal curriculum. The school is highly successful in developing children's learning through a wide range of enrichment activities. For example, students engage enthusiastically in activities related to the Guggenheim art program, studio in a school program, ballroom dancing and a tournament winning chess team. These programs, allied with a stimulating curriculum, help students develop into confident, motivated individuals who know how to get on well together and enjoy being at school. Attendance is above average, behavior is very good and attitudes are positive. Students are confident that any concerns they may have will be quickly and sensitively dealt with.

The school budget is used effectively to support the curriculum and planned improvements. The commitment to the reading recovery programme is an example of how efficiently resources are used. Staffing and scheduling decisions are carefully considered to reflect the needs of the students. Parents work tirelessly to raise extra funds to ensure their children have the best opportunities for learning. Information about students' progress is used well to ensure that there are continually high expectations of their performance. The interim reports which parents receive are very detailed and encourage parents to make a response to the outcomes they see in relation to their child's progress.

Quality Statement 4 - Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

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

The turnover of staff is very low; and even after retirement many return to work in the school on a part-time or voluntary basis. All staff enjoy working in this very happy school where everyone is valued and well supported. Any new teachers are very carefully selected to be able to fit into the unique, 'nurturing' culture of the school. An impressive, reflective team of staff has been formed who work together extremely well. Professional development is an ongoing process of discussion, collaboration and sharing of good practice. The principal provides excellent leadership and all staff are passionate about their school. This cohesion provides students with a happy caring stimulating environment which is the foundation of the success they achieve.

The principal has high expectations of performance by regularly checking on the quality of instruction. She is very successful in communicating and sharing her vision and values with everyone connected with the school. She is held in the highest esteem by staff, parents and students. She is very well supported by her administration and the school runs very smoothly on a day-to-day basis. The school elicits community support from a

number of agencies, for example, school to work, immigrant social services, Chinese planning council as well as institutes of higher education. These partnerships make a positive contribution to the life of the school. The principal frequently attends and supports professional development activities to promote school objectives. For example, staff voluntarily give up their lunch times to engage in professional discussions about the development of literacy skills in the context of their respective classrooms.

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.

The way that the analysis and use of assessment information permeates the school's practice is a significant strength. All areas of the schools' work are carefully planned, drawing on all available data and are kept under constant review. There is systematic monitoring and revision of planning for all students. As a result, staff regularly plan, evaluate and revise interventions and initiatives according to the needs of their students. Staff are closely involved in decision making so that school planning is determined by the results of diagnostic and achievement data. This analysis gives a clear understanding of students' progress. Plans have precise goals and timeframes and are revised when new information becomes available. The Comprehensive Education Plan is a working document reviewed as a whole on several occasions throughout the year.

Despite the school's success there is no air of complacency and the principal leads a team with a high level of commitment to further improvement. It is the combination of a clear instructional philosophy of providing authentic learning experiences for students, allied to valuing the unique capabilities of individual students, that provides the basis for the continuing improvement of this school.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Benjamin Altman (PS 042)	∅	✓	+
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