



**NYCDOE**

**Quality Review: Final Report**

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



# **Quality Review Report**

**Simon Baruch School**

**Middle School 104**

**330 East 21 Street  
New York  
NY 10010**

**Principal: Rosemarie Gaetani**

**Dates of review: January 24 - 26, 2007**

**Reviewer: Stephanie Krusa**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Simon Baruch School serves 1060 students in grades 6 through 8. Of those, 17% are special education students, a proportion slightly higher than similar and City schools. The proportion of English language learners is 5% of the student body, which is down slightly from last year and smaller than in similar and City schools. Of these, most speak Spanish or Chinese. The student body is 31% Asian, 30% White, 24% Hispanic and 15% Black. The school is not eligible for Title 1 funding. Attendance, at 95%, is above that of similar and City schools.

The Simon Baruch School has a gifted program. Students are selected through a regional process, and travel from throughout Manhattan and other boroughs to attend. Locally-zoned students are guaranteed a place if they select this school during the application process at the end of grade 5. The school is organized into houses to enable staff to work together in specific teams.

The principal served the school as teacher and assistant principal for 23 years before being appointed to her current position in June of 2006.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal has established herself as a strong instructional leader by implementing new initiatives aligned with mandated curriculum and standards.
- The administrative team has high expectations for teachers and a professional development plan in place to support best practices throughout the school.
- The pupil progress team monitors students at risk and works closely with teachers, parents and providers to enhance learning for this cohort.
- Small learning communities provide students with a highly personalized learning experience, and enable teachers to pool resources and grow together professionally.
- Teachers work collegially to refine teaching methods in support of students' progress.
- The school culture is supportive and welcoming, and students, parents and staff feel valued and respected.
- The principal has established constructive collaborations with universities and outside consultants to strengthen key components of curriculum and instruction programs.

### What the school needs to improve

- Develop teachers' understanding about the value and use of data to continually assess learning and plan effectively and build diagnostic assessment skills to plan suitable instructional programs.
- Support staff access to data through updated equipment and technology training.
- Review and formalize the school grading policy by establishing criteria for portfolios, rubrics and other assessment tools.
- Working closely with the academic intervention services team and parent coordinator, build students' attendance at extended day sessions.
- Involve students and parents in accessing and analyzing assessments and in defining interim goals to strengthen their accountability and engagement.
- Continue building capacity to strengthen differentiated instruction.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

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

The principal, upon her appointment, immediately implemented reforms to improve instruction and align the school more closely with the City-mandated curriculum. Positive changes included revised scheduling to give all teachers a weekly two-hour block for collegial planning and discussion within their teams. In contrast to previous years, the school is more focused on data collection and staff now understand how the effective analysis of data reveals what students have learned and what remains to be taught. Goals are more focused on data outcomes and steps to involve all members of the school's community including parents and students are currently being introduced.

The school has embraced change and is responding well to the challenge. Parents are pleased with the principal's leadership and the school's welcoming and supportive tone. The staff work well together and are enthused about the innovations the principal has established. Teachers' needs are being met through various in-house opportunities for professional development, including a recent collaboration with outside literacy consultants that is improving the quality of learning environments and teaching in many classes.

### 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.**

Under the principal, data collection has become a focus, and staff have quickly moved from a sense of complacency about high student scores to an understanding that a good school can always improve. In particular, a closer look is being given to students at risk, and staff have a firmer sense of the performance levels and needs of English language learners, ethnic groups and students identified for academic intervention services. The school is in compliance with City mandates to support students who are not performing at grade level, implementing instructional interventions and measuring progress over time. While systems are in place for monitoring the progress of all individuals over time, the recording of progress is not consistent across the school. The principal and administrative team are focused on enabling teachers to be more skillful in defining and developing additional data sources at each grade, and for all students, particularly those at risk. Staff carefully monitor data showing progress for each grade, class, and of all groups, including some high-performing students in the gifted program. They have used the data to identify the need to challenge this group further.

The principal works closely with a similar school to generally compare performance and progress, from year to year and for grades, classrooms and groups. In-house, staff use faculty conferences to examine and compare performance data from year to year, and to determine progress for ethnic groups, English language learners and special education students.

**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 new school schedule provides a weekly ninety-minute block for teachers in each house to meet in teams to plan and discuss students’ progress. Although not formally structured for analyzing data, some houses use this time to do so to set measurable goals for student achievement. Other houses do not follow this lead and so do not use data so well to set goals for grades, classes and groups that match the learning needs of all students. The principal has begun to lay groundwork for this by setting expectations about the design and use of school-based assessments. As a result, staff are becoming more skilled in setting short-term goals for student learning by using student performance as an indicator for next instructional steps.

Early in the year, staff meet to identify those students most in need of support. Particular attention is given to these students by the academic intervention services team, whose members advise classroom teachers about strategies and interventions for use in the classroom. However, teachers rely too much on the team. They are not all sufficiently involved in puzzling out student needs and so strengthening their own diagnostic skills and their ability to match student needs with interventions. To this end, the principal is acquiring resources and has plans for collegial discussions with all teachers about how to better use data to strengthen teachers’ goal-setting skills for these students.

The school conveys high expectations to students and their parents so they have equally high expectations to achieve well. While goals are shared during regular formal and informal discussions, students and parents are not involved in assessing their work and setting subsequent goals. Opportunities for parents to learn more about the school’s work are in place and many help their children at home so they can succeed.

The staff is focused on achievement, and have the drive to make any necessary changes to accelerate student progress and improve performance. The Comprehensive Education Plan provides a suitable framework for this work and is a means of involving all members of the school community in setting the school’s goals.

**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.**

Recent reforms have effectively focused on aligning the school’s programs with the mandated literacy and mathematics curriculum, so that clear, explicit guidelines about classroom instruction are in place for staff. In addition, staff have worked collegially to create pacing calendars and curriculum maps for each content area that help guide instruction. Learning is assessed against curriculum performance indicators to determine areas needing more emphasis.

The school continues to strengthen its use of data to plan students’ learning and identify intervention programs. Teachers are establishing differentiated instruction more effectively through better use of the school’s assessment practices although the quality in practice is

inconsistent. The principal has reviewed the grading policy, until now a decision left to individual teachers, and is now developing a school-wide policy to establish the criteria for portfolios, rubrics and other assessment tools.

The staff are deeply committed to students, demonstrating accountability for student outcomes as they work together to share information and define next steps. Beyond the regular academic day, teachers volunteer time to work with selected students needing support with academic or social issues. Students have at least one adult to turn to answer questions or listen to concerns. The personal nature of the houses is key in pairing each student with at least one supportive adult.

Budgeting decisions emanate from needs revealed in student data. For example, in September the school implemented a remedial writing program for 8th grade students, when data revealed gaps in writing skills. Using this new intervention program, literacy teachers began providing 150 minutes of remediation for targeted students. In addition, when it was determined that English language learners required additional support, a second teacher was hired two days a week. Both groups have since made significant gains. The school plans include continuing to develop literacy resources, especially more variety of books in some classroom library collections. Although the academic intervention services team works well with selected students, the morning extended day program is very poorly attended, wasting the resources committed to it.

Most students are engaged in their work, supported by mutual respect and trust between students and staff. Though morale and scores are particularly high among the gifted cohort, many are not sufficiently challenged. To address this, the principal and instructional team have introduced the use of interdisciplinary projects to motivate all students and to offer them choice and encourage self-directed inquiry. The school carefully monitors attendance and tackles any absences through supportive interventions. When one group of students failed to meet an annual target because of attendance, effective steps were taken to assure full attendance, and the target was successfully met the following year.

**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 some well-developed areas.**

The principal demonstrates strong leadership and is respected by the entire school family for implementing necessary innovations, communicating effectively and maintaining an organized and smooth running building. She has built a highly competent instructional leadership team by hiring two assistant principals, with complementary skills and experience in technology and use of data to build the school's and staff capacity. For example, many teachers are not conversant with technology, nor is the school well equipped. The assistant principals play a key role in building each of these areas and the school is acquiring new equipment and improving teachers' abilities to access and manipulate data.

The school has a comprehensive professional development plan to address needs revealed in student data. As stated, of primary concern is the development of effective strategies for differentiating instruction and planning suitable in-class interventions. An ongoing series of workshops is in place to strengthen this area. The school is formalizing its current portfolio system for recording student progress to better enable teachers to

analyze student work in context and to assess critical thinking and to identify next learning steps.

The instructional team is well aware of the strengths and needs of each staff member and provides ongoing and carefully tailored support through formal and informal observations, discussions and demonstrating effective teaching. In addition, teachers support each other through collaborative team planning and inter-visitations in their houses and with similar schools to further develop capacity in using data to set goals and differentiate instruction

Outside literacy consultancy is building a comprehensive balanced literacy program and has made significant progress in strengthening reading and writing workshops. Consequently, many classrooms reflect good literacy practices, and the drive to bring all to high quality continues.

**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 principal has put suitable systems in place to monitor and evaluate the work of the school, and are becoming more established as the year progresses. Student performance is used to support this process. For example, the school is comparing and contrasting student progress across classrooms to measure the impact of instruction. Regular team meetings openly and honestly review practice and identify any necessary revisions to curriculum and instructional programs. The academic intervention team plays a major role in planning, monitoring, evaluating and revising interventions.

A staff member has been assigned the task of gathering all available data to ensure the school has access to the full range of data needed to evaluate the effectiveness of practice and programs. The instructional team is working with teachers to build understanding about how the process of data collection, analysis and assessment is ongoing and how it is used to monitor progress towards the school's goals. The Comprehensive Education Plan details planned action and benchmarks so the school knows when it has successfully reached its goals. Structures are in place to review shortly this academic year and to evaluate the school's success in its drive to raising student achievement.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: Simon Baruch School (MS 104)</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>	Ø	✓	+
3.1 The school selects the curriculum based on how well it aligns with or implements the mandated curriculum and on the curriculum's capacity to generate meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and to support the school's high expectations and improvement plans.			X
3.2 Teachers are accountable for improving instruction and student outcomes. They plan and differentiate their instruction based on the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.3 Budgeting decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.			X
3.4 Staffing decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.			X
3.5 Scheduling decisions about the use of teacher and student time are guided by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes.		X	
3.6 Instructional programs actively engage students.		X	
3.7 Staff know and respect students and respond to their academic needs, as well as their personal needs that affect academic performance. Each student knows and trusts an adult on the staff who is concerned about him or her.			X
3.8 Student attendance and engagement are high priorities. High rates and patterns of absences trigger immediate intervention.			X
<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>	Ø	✓	+
4.1 Leaders, faculty, and staff are selected based on their high expectations for student performance and progress and based on their commitment and capacity to use data, compare outcomes within and across classrooms and schools and develop and revise plans and methods to improve performance and progress.		X	
4.2 Professional development decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes. Professional development is designed to help leaders, faculty, and staff use data, self- and peer-assessments, and collaboration with peers to achieve goals for improved school and student outcomes. Professional development and self- and peer-evaluation are aligned and overlap.			X
4.3 The principal frequently observes classroom teaching and has a considered strategy for improving the quality of each teacher's instruction. Teachers frequently observe and support each other's classroom instruction with the goal of improving student outcomes.			X
4.4 Planning, evaluation of results, and revision of plans takes place in teams. Leaders and faculty inform each other of their goals and results, candidly evaluate themselves and each other, and use what is learned to drive improvement.		X	
4.5 The principal is respected and has capacity to effect change.			X
4.6 The school runs smoothly. Procedures are clear, communicated to all, and are generally followed.			X
4.7 The school aligns youth development and support services around stated academic goals. Partnerships with outside bodies are routinely used to achieve academic goals.			X
<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>	Ø	✓	+
5.1 All school plans and other interventions include frequent interim goals and diagnostic assessments of progress designed to reveal in objectively measurable ways whether the plan is being effectively implemented and reaching stated goals.		X	
5.2 Comparisons of student progress within and across classrooms and schools are used in making interim diagnostic assessments and measuring the progress of plans and interventions.		X	
5.3 Information generated by periodic assessments and diagnostic measures of progress and comparisons is used to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals. Interim and final goals are modified when data objectively demonstrate that revision is required.		X	
5.4 Each plan's interim and final outcomes drive successive phases of goal setting and improvement planning, and each successive phase is characterized by agile and flexible realignment of practices and resources to improve student academic outcomes.		X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>		X	