



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



# **Quality Review Report**

**Elias Bernstein School**

**Intermediate School 007**

**1270 Huguenot Avenue  
Staten Island  
NY 10312**

**Principal: Dr. Nora De Rosa-Karby**

**Dates of review: December 5 - 8, 2006**

**Reviewer: Donald Morrison**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Elias Bernstein Intermediate School 7 is a large middle school near the southern end of Staten Island, which serves approximately 1200 students in grades 6 through 8. The school's population comprises 87% White, 5% Asian/Pacific Islander, 7% Hispanic, and 1% Black students. The school is not Title 1 funded. There are fewer special education students (9%) and a much smaller proportion (below 1%) of English language learners than in similar and City schools.

Attendance at 93% is below that of similar schools, and slightly higher than City averages.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal and her leadership team have quickly created a culture of high expectations, collaboration, and reflective practice.
- Curriculum coverage is monitored effectively through weekly classroom visits, working with teachers to modify instructional goals where necessary.
- The school makes effective use of available data to monitor students' learning of specific skills and concepts.
- Students have good rapport with teachers who strive to engage them actively in class discussions.
- Teachers and instructional leaders work hard to ensure that special education students are fully supported so they learn in mainstream classes with their peers.
- The instructional leadership team plays an active role in providing relevant mentoring and coaching in order to improve the quality of teaching.
- The school has a range of successful academic supports and interventions for students who struggle to reach grade expectations.
- A range of effective professional learning opportunities has enabled teachers to reflect on their practices and improve instruction.
- Instructional leaders actively seek to learn from the best practices of other schools in the district.

### What the school needs to improve

- Continue working with teachers to refine instructional strategies that engage all students more fully in classroom discussion.
- Ensure lesson objectives are aligned to the analysis of data showing what students need to learn next.
- Align goals for improving student performance more closely to the analysis of assessment data for each grade, class and subject.
- Embed procedures for more regular interim assessments of student learning that facilitate closer monitoring of progress and raise teachers' accountability for results.
- Continue to work with teachers to gain greater consistency in implementing agreed instruction practices.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This is a well-developed school.**

The principal and her instructional leadership team have a good understanding of the school's strengths and challenges. They have very high expectations for themselves, for teachers, and for students. They recognize a need to do even more to ensure that all students are performing at the highest possible level, so that test results are above those of similar schools as well as City schools and students make good progress in all subjects.

The school culture is that of a true professional learning community. Instructional leaders, teachers, students, and parents alike describe a school that cares deeply about students, holds high expectations for teaching and learning, and works continually to build its own capacity. As one teacher put it, 'We've grown together as a family.' This feature alone is perhaps the school's most valuable asset, in that it provides a solid platform for continuing future growth.

The school is poised to consolidate and embed its good work by ensuring that all teachers follow the school's vision and practices for ensuring good learning.

### 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.**

Instructional leaders make good use of data from City and State tests and assessments to identify student needs. They have put into place their own interim assessments in mathematics and English language arts which enable a secure analysis and comparison of what each student, class and grade know and are able to do in these areas. An additional member of staff helps this process and produces a clear overview of progress in these groups. As a result, the school is looking for reasons why grade 7 students who achieved level 4 in State tests only reached level 3 in grade 8.

In addition, a small number of teachers are using the Princeton Review to design and administer their own assessments aligned with State tests. There are no systems as yet to assess science and social studies. Formal written assessments are supplemented by student-teacher conferences, a relatively new process that is currently being implemented across the school. The school has not analyzed data by ethnic groups until recently and so has only just picked up the fact that usually, apart from special education students and English language learners, it is the Hispanic students who do not reach grade standards.

The school has effective systems in place to identify and help all students at risk of not reaching grade standards. Special education students and English language learners are well supported. As many as possible are taught in heterogeneous classes and most students receive the help and support they need to continue making academic progress, regardless of their starting points.

**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.**

Teachers set specific, measurable, short-term and long-term goals for the academic growth of individual students. However, the school does not yet set aggregate goals for students in particular subject areas and grade-levels, or for particular student subgroups. As a result, it is difficult for the instructional leadership team to measure overall progress in these areas beyond the more general goal of moving as many students as possible into levels 3 and 4 while meeting mandated targets.

The school does a good job of setting specific goals for struggling students. Teachers maintain daily learning logs for special education students, English language learners and all students who are identified as at risk of not reaching grade standards. These ‘dailies’ identify what is expected of students and how they performed each day, both academically and behaviorally and help teachers to plan effectively the next steps in learning.

While progress has been made in making clear and specific learning objectives for students, such as through the use of rubrics for evaluating particular work products, teachers do not always establish measurable objectives for each lesson as a common practice. In some classrooms, lesson objectives identify what students will learn while in others they focus too much on what students will do in lessons.

The school sets high expectations of students’ behavior and academic achievement. Individual goals are shared with parents who are then enabled to give good support at home with learning. Goals to improve student achievement in all subjects drive the work of all members of the school community.

**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 school is doing an especially good job aligning curriculum with academic standards and assessments. Instructional leaders observe classrooms on a regular basis to ensure pacing guides are being followed in all subject areas, including physical education. They meet with teachers weekly to discuss how well the curriculum is accelerating progress and make adjustments where necessary. Classroom teachers were fully involved in producing the guides, so they all take ownership, and view them as helpful and flexible supports.

Classrooms are generally well organized, with most students actively engaged in the lessons, and with teachers and students demonstrating a high level of mutual respect and regard for each other. Students confidently ask questions, especially for clarification. Lessons are appropriately challenging, reflecting a curriculum that is well aligned with local standards and assessments. However, some classroom discussions are focused more on facts and procedures than on deep conceptual understanding of the content. While most students appear to be actively engaged in lessons, not all participate fully or give signs of full understanding. Not all teachers ask questions that challenge students to think or give

enough opportunity for them to test out answers with a partner or small group before answering. In group work, the activity is not always structured in such a way that all students participate equally, such as by giving them assigned roles, or asking them to solve a problem individually, then share with the group.

The principal manages her budget, resources and staffing skillfully to ensure greatest impact on student learning. For example, she has hired a guidance counselor for each grade level so students get the extra attention they need from adult mentors. The schedule has been adjusted to extend time for mathematics and language arts in double periods. Teachers value the ready availability of resources and additional materials they need to support instruction effectively.

Students express positive feelings about their school. Most feel that the level of challenge is appropriate, and say that they enjoy positive relationships with teachers. They are especially enthusiastic about the extra-curricular opportunities, including frequent field trips, some to places as far away as Los Angeles.

Extended absences and so failure to complete assignments trigger quick interventions, including calls home. The school has a full array of student support services that rigorously follow up all absences.

**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.**

Staff are selected based on their commitment to the school's vision about students' learning and on their willingness and ability to use data to inform their instruction. The bulk of professional development occurs during regular voluntary 'lunch and learn' sessions. The leadership team has used these to present a wide and varied range of workshops on how to use data to plan differentiated instruction and activities and strategies that will fully engage learners. Teachers often use lunchtime to talk about their lessons and share ideas informally. Teachers take responsibility for their own professional learning, and sometimes volunteer to lead workshops for colleagues.

The principal, assistant principals and coaches frequently visit classes and individual feedback is given which has led to improved instruction. The school does not yet have a consistent framework for gathering the information gained to identify whole-school strengths and areas for development. Classroom visits do not focus strongly enough on how professional development has helped improve teaching methods and practices.

Instructional leaders use student assessment data to identify teachers who may be in need of coaching and mentoring. The literacy and mathematics coaches are assigned to specific teachers and model lessons for all teachers who want help with particular topics. The school has identified model classrooms for English language arts and mathematics at each of the three grades. Teachers have regular opportunities to observe and give critical feedback on lessons and to review student work using the rubrics that have been developed.

The principal has a strong vision for the school, with high expectations for herself and her staff. She is respected and well-liked by the entire school community. She delegates especially well, and so effectively fosters collaboration within her leadership team as well

as among teachers. The basic operations of the school run smoothly. There is a clear commitment from instructional leaders and teachers to use their analysis of data to evaluate their own practice and monitor their impact on student progress. While some teams meet regularly to review the work of the school, common planning time has been lost through the rescheduling and so teachers' collaborative working time diminished.

The school has a full array of student support services, including guidance counselors at every grade level, a school psychologist, and a part-time social worker. The progress of students who receive support are discussed during regular meetings of the pupil personnel team, and decisions focus on how effectively programs are helping them to reach their goals.

**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.**

Instructional leaders have paid particular attention to planning and delivering a higher quality curriculum and checking whether different teachers are following agreed practices. As a result of discussions, the pacing guides are modified weekly.

Information about student progress gained from the school's assessments is beginning to be used to identify particular areas of academic focus over the course of the year. The leadership team feels that teacher-created assessments as well as the emerging portfolio system could also be used more effectively to monitor student progress. However, these are not yet sufficiently well aligned with standards and scored consistently from one classroom to the next.

The relative absence of specific, measurable, near-term goals for academic performance of student groups makes it difficult for teachers and instructional leaders to track interim progress in specific areas, and limits the potential for closer monitoring of the results of specific interventions. This may also be true at the classroom level, where teachers do not have specific goals to allow them to judge the effectiveness of lessons and to modify their instruction accordingly.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: Elias Bernstein School (IS 007)</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>	∅	✓	+
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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