



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Bertha Dreyfus School

Intermediate School 049

**101 Warren Street
Staten Island
NY 10304**

Principal: Linda Hill

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Bertha Dreyfus School, Intermediate School 49, is a middle school for students in grades 6, 7 and 8. The school has around 1,049 students enrolled. The proportion of special education students at 25% is much larger than similar and City schools. About 17% of students are English language learners. Ethnicity is mixed, with students from Hispanic families making up about 40% and Black families, many recently arrived from Africa, making up about 34% of the school's population. A further 18% are White and 8% are from Asian and other backgrounds.

This is a Title 1 school with approximately 90% of students eligible. At around 90%, attendance is below City average but close to that in similar schools.

The school is now in its third year of implementing the America's Choice Model. The current school year has seen a tremendous drop in the number of student suspensions. The school is organized into three smaller academies.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The administration has effectively introduced new systems that make students and teachers accountable and that are improving academic rigor and school safety.
- Portfolios of student work are being used well for the purpose of assessment and monitoring of progress in literacy and mathematics.
- The staff work collaboratively to set rigorous goals for planning and school improvement.
- The school uses outside partnerships well to help achieve its academic goals and students' social responsibility.
- The school schedule is usefully organized into a six-day program that facilitates the additional planning time and professional development.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that classroom instruction is less teacher-directed.
- Give students more opportunities to work collaboratively and to be actively involved in a range of learning methods and activities in lessons.
- Involve all members of the school community in using school and student goals to develop plans that drive instruction.
- Develop all teachers' skills and expertise to use interim assessments to enhance their practice and improve student academic outcomes.
- Establish the systems and strategies introduced to improve the academic achievement of special education students and English language learners.
- Find additional ways to encourage all parents to support fully and be involved in the school's work.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

The school has made significant strides in the collection of data and uses it efficiently when planning improvement and setting goals. Test scores have risen consistently over recent years. The number of students making the honor roll has risen dramatically and the number of students being accepted into specialized high schools has increased.

The administration team has made an admirable effort to improve communications, maintain an open door policy, re-organize the school to facilitate collaborative planning and professional development, and to build teams of people who work together for the benefit of students' learning. Efforts continue to involve representatives of all of members involved in the school more in setting goals for school improvement. School safety and social development have been two of the most important and successful focuses for improvement with the restructuring of the school. Students feel safer and profess to be happier than they were before.

The workshop model for reading and writing is being implemented in most classrooms. Teachers now develop reading and writing calendars for yearly pacing in all grades. Observations of classroom instruction are scheduled regularly and give useful feedback to teachers. However, students are still not involved enough in all lessons with some teachers giving too much direction on what and how students should learn.

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.

The analysis of City and State school examinations in English language arts and mathematics is disseminated to teachers and parents in a timely manner. In addition, information from the Princeton Review, the Grow Report and Direct Reading Assessment give the school secure information about students' performance and progress in these subjects. Teachers are held accountable for maintaining spreadsheets detailing enough information to periodically monitor the progress of individuals, classes and groupings of students. The principal maintains a number of data binders in her office which demonstrate the wide variety of measures used by the school to make comparisons with other schools and across grades, classrooms and subject areas. The use of data and assessments to plan instruction, drive interventions and student referrals has become a strong characteristic of the school's administration. These measures are only just starting to accelerate the progress of special education students and English language learners.

Teachers generate a wider range of assessments in classes, including conferencing notes, readers' and writers' notebooks and student work portfolios. Assistant principals collect and monitor these teacher assessments monthly and use them as professional development topics at academy, grade, department and faculty conferences. Time is allocated for teachers to visit one of three computer labs in order to examine student data,

update progress of students on interim assessments and make comparisons across English language arts and mathematics, classes and grades. Teachers compare student work collectively at meetings and customize rubrics for subject units of work.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student’s next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student’s learning.

This area of the school’s work is proficient.

The school administration and faculty use data to discuss collaboratively how best to plan for improved teaching and learning. There is a useful range of administrative and professional development meetings in which plans are formulated and measurable goals for the school’s short- and long-term improvement are set. These include the school leadership team meetings, faculty conferences, grade meetings, department meetings and parent conferences. The information is included in the action planning set out in the Comprehensive Education Plan and other school improvement documents.

One-on-one conversations about improvement efforts and monitoring of student progress occur every day between administrators and classroom teachers both formally and informally. Goals focus on the expected performance of individual students in each class and grade in tested subjects, with particular emphasis given to those students who need extra help to achieve grade standards. The consistent use of available data to update understanding of students’ performance and progress has created a new awareness of what can be done to increase attention and improve resources for students in greatest need. As a result, special education students, English language learners and those at risk of falling behind are beginning to make better progress.

The school administration has high expectations for student performance and a strong commitment to use student data to improve achievement and monitor progress. These high expectations are now conveyed to staff, students and parents and caregivers. There is a small core of parents who are very involved in the school’s work and acknowledge the recent improvements. Attendance at parent teacher conferences has risen significantly in the last few years. The principal has been working with the most active parents to gather ideas on how to encourage all parents to get involved.

Collaborative planning, student and parent engagement, and the setting of high and challenging goals to accelerate learning are still a fairly new concept to many members of the school community. As a result, the use of goals and plans to improve students’ performance and progress are not established in practice.

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 undeveloped.

The school uses meaningful interim data from standardized assessments and teacher generated assessments to implement and adjust aspects of the mandated curriculum, to better meet the goals for student improvement and progress. Academies and grades develop curriculum calendars to pace instruction.

The new principal has become more agile in the use of the school budget and in using data to inform decisions about scheduling and staffing. She consults with key staff members and with the parents advisory committee so decisions are collaborative. Scheduling has been improved by the implementation of a six-day program which facilitates common planning and professional development time.

Teachers in general understand that they are now held accountable for planning and differentiating instruction, based on needs revealed by student data and focused school plans for improvement. A number of teachers, however, are not confident in how to effectively use data when planning, or how to use instructional strategies to effectively target small groups and individual students. This is most important for special education students and English language learners who lag behind other students in this school in academic achievement.

Not all teachers sufficiently and actively engage all students in their learning. In too many lessons, teachers stand in front of the room and lead whole class instruction for the majority of the teaching period. As a result, learning is not differentiated sufficiently well to meet the varied needs of students. Their involvement in lessons is limited and they are not clear about how to improve their work independently. Successful teachers in the school plan lessons that are more interactive because they have high expectations that students can and will take a more active role in their learning.

The school places suitable emphasis on students' social and emotional development. The school is much calmer as a result of students' personal commitment to become socially responsible. Students asked say they feel able to ask an adult for help with their work or guidance of a personal nature.

There has been some improvement in student attendance the last few years due to the school's determined efforts to tackle absence from day one.

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.

The principal is respected and has demonstrated the capacity to effect change. The school's hiring practice reflects this commitment to quality and building capacity school-wide. New teachers are often teaching fellows from the College of Staten Island, or are substitute teachers that the school knows well and so is assured they are competent in teaching literacy and mathematics. Teachers are hired who demonstrate the ability to work in teams to plan for instruction, evaluate results, and revise instructional practices and interventions.

Teachers are encouraged to engage in professional training and are given opportunities to do so in common planning time, grade meetings, department meetings and academy meetings. Professional development is focused on the needs of the school, established by examining student data and whole school goals. Teachers work more regularly in teams to evaluate their work and to revise planning in response to student performance. This is still fairly new and is beginning to make a difference with better-matched teaching and learning to the range of performance groups evident in some classes. There are not yet

enough opportunities for more successful teachers to share good practice with their colleagues through additional classroom inter-visitations.

On a daily basis the principal and assistant principals observe classroom teachers formally and informally. Discussions afterwards focus on what went well and identify areas for improvement. In this way, the school is establishing an insistence on all teachers using data to differentiate instruction to meet the needs of the range of performance in classes. Communications are clear and so staff, students and parents know what the school's expectations are and what is happening from day to day. Behavior has much improved and the school building is safe and secure.

The school has a determined commitment to strengthen outside partnership with organizations that will support the school's goals to improve academic achievement and social development of all students. The Youth Service Development program supplies attendance improvement services, guidance for troubled students and conflict resolution services. The partnership with a children's program sponsored by the United Way gives individualized services for students and families in need.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerated learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school monitors and evaluates its work closely, using student performance and progress to measure the effectiveness of interventions and programs. Different teams have specific roles and responsibilities and so all aspects of the school's work are reviewed regularly. Goals are revised if necessary and programs adjusted in an attempt to ensure the needs of all students are fully met. Interim and final measures drive successive phases of goal-setting and improvement planning although their implementation in all classes remains inconsistent.

Accountability systems have been put in place by the school leadership team to monitor and revise plans and interventions through frequent interim assessments of progress and student learning outcomes. There are weekly examinations of student data at grade, department and academy meetings. Information generated by periodic assessments are used to revise plans and goals immediately, to redirect resources, and refer students to the pupil personnel team for interventions, or to an outside partnership for expanded services for children and families. Systems are still too new to be fully established and for learning in all classes to be rigorously focused on students' interim performance goals.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Bertha Dreyfus School (IS 49)	∅	✓	+
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	