



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Briggs Avenue Academy

Public School 8

**3010 Briggs Avenue
Bronx
NY 10458**

Principal: Maria Quail

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Reviewer: Sheldon Berman

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Public School 8 is located in the Norwood section of the Bronx, in two buildings a block apart. There are 1165 students in kindergarten through grade 5 from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Many students are new to the country and originate from Mexico, Central and South America, the Caribbean, Eastern Europe, the Middle East and Africa. Approximately 75% of the students come from homes in which languages other than English are spoken.

The majority of students (68%) are Hispanic, 14% are Black, 8% are White and 8% are Asian or other. Nearly 28% of students are English language learners, with Spanish being the native language for a large majority, and 18% are special education students. Approximately 85% of students are Title I eligible, which is higher than that in similar and City schools. Attendance is 93% which is close to that in similar schools and slightly higher than City schools.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Effective practices for gathering and using data are well integrated into all phases of planning resulting in instruction which matches the needs of students.
- The administrators provide effective and thoughtful instructional leadership.
- The principal has a clear focus on high achievement and is very effectively supported by her cabinet.
- The principal utilizes her resources well, including limited space and time, to staff, schedule and support the changing needs of the instructional program.
- The principal is highly effective in developing important additional opportunities and support from community based organizations.
- The administration and staff create a strong sense of safety, support and community much appreciated by students and parents.
- The administration is very effective in promoting professional development, teamwork and leadership among the teachers.
- Teachers are dedicated to improving their own practice and contributing to the collegial ethos of the school.
- The halls and classrooms are warm, inviting and visually stimulating.
- The school environment is calm, orderly, and conducive to learning.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that student performance data on targeted benchmark content is generated in a shorter timeframe, allowing for an even more efficient instructional response.
- Compile student assessment data in ways that better identify trends in subgroups by ethnicity and gender.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a well-developed school.

The Briggs Avenue Academy serves an ethnically diverse population mostly new to the country. As such, the school draws on the diversity of the community while integrating the students and their families into the broader American culture.

The school does an excellent job of nurturing growth in an encouraging environment for students, staff and parents. Despite a student population that is 40% higher than its designed capacity, the principal's effective management, staffing and use of community resources have made it possible to maintain a small school atmosphere where the academic and personal needs of every student is attended to. An example of the school's commitment to its community is evident in the on site clinic from the Montefiore Hospital. Staffed with a pediatrician, nurse, psychiatrist, social worker and psychologists, this clinic and its Wellness Program delivers direct medical and mental health support to nearly 85% of the students and their families. Very good use is made of a range of partnerships to support the work of the school at many levels.

Through collaborative work at all levels, the staff demonstrates a deep commitment to the professional improvement of practice, the development of a meaningful curriculum and shared leadership. Effective use is made of data and systems and structures are well developed. There is a constant evaluation of performance and progress and a realignment of instruction and resources when needed. The school has recognized the need to shorten the time-frame for the analysis of student performance data in targeted benchmark content and further analyze and compare the performance of sub-groups by ethnicity and gender. The school is a calm, orderly community and hallways and classrooms are inviting and visually stimulating.

This is a successful school which rightly prides itself on 'being at the centre of its community'.

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 school uses very effective systems to update and monitor the performance and progress of all students and identified subgroups. The most significant of these is the development of personal intervention plans. These are created by teachers focusing on five students at a time, in priority order, over a six week period. In this way, every student gets the opportunity to work directly with the teacher to reflect on and plan for their own learning processes, ensuring their attention on school success. Individual students also maintain a portfolio that follows them through their school experience at Briggs Avenue Academy and is passed on to their next school.

Weekly cabinet, academic intervention team, coaches' meetings and monthly grade level meetings routinely focus on the analysis of student work. Student or group assessment results are also used to evaluate progress with respect to benchmarks. This process is made easier by the use of the grade master screener that allows item and error analysis on multiple-choice assessments. Student performance data on targeted benchmark content is not always generated quickly enough to ensure an immediate instructional response.

Performance in City and State tests are used to make comparisons across grades and with similar schools and used to inform grouping and curricular decisions. Running records are maintained by teachers for all students, and shared within grade teams or with coaches and administrators to plan strategies for individuals and small groups. Particular attention is given to tracking results with English language learners and special education students.

A database is being constructed using data imported from the City system. Plans are being developed to better segregate data based on ethnicity and other groups, for example gender, though this is not yet in place.

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.

Planning and setting goals are high priorities at this school. This is illustrated by the practice of having meetings in late summer and a full day in early September devoted to setting goals for the school, team, and individual students at the beginning of the year. This is followed by a full day mid-year to evaluate progress and adjust goals. As a result, adjustments to student groupings and teacher assignments are made on the basis of this thorough evaluation.

Staff have been effectively trained to look at student work using item and error analysis. This has resulted in the beneficial practice of reviewing student performance data and portfolios by individual teachers and in grade groups. One of the positive outcomes is the effective use of flexible groupings, allowing moving within and across grade groups based on unit and short cycle assessments. Another result is the timely assignment of students to extra support, such as before or after school programs, in response to recognized needs. The instructional support team meets twice weekly to determine support strategies for the most at-risk students. A further benefit has been the better identification of potentially gifted students triggering requests for testing. These students are then assigned, through a special relationship, to innovative Saturday and summer programs at the private Horace Mann School.

The school's high expectations for all members of the community are characterized by the level of care and commitment. High expectations and mutual respect are evident in the classroom exchanges. Rubrics, statements of expectations and student work in various stages of completion are displayed in every classroom and the hallways. Parents are encouraged in every way to attend counseling sessions concerning their child's progress, as well as to participate in the school leadership team, or to attend the popular Montefiore-created Tuesday afternoon or Saturday wellness classes. Parents are able to take

advantage of the open door policy to speak to a teacher or administrator which helps them to support their child in a timely fashion.

By creating a 'risk-free' environment the school has enabled all members of the community to contribute their ideas resulting in shared goals and plans to improve student performance and progress.

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 develops its curriculum to align with the mandated curriculum but also to make sure that it meets the needs of its individual community of students. A range of programs have been developed to support students including those related to early morning literacy, English language learners and mathematics, the Saturday academy and extended day program. Very effective use is made of the character education program that develops respect, responsibility, fairness and tolerance. The school works very hard to overcome the limitations on space and the development of the curriculum created by overcrowding.

Responding to the analysis of data from on-going assessment, teachers effectively differentiate their instruction through the use of small groupings, centers and individual teaching. As a result, the classroom activities and conversations are engaging for students and they enjoy learning. Teachers are held accountable for the progress of their students but are also well supported which enables them to engage in open dialog to develop ways to improve their instruction.

The principal has made very effective and responsive budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions driven by needs identified from the data and the diversity of the population. She has successfully added instructional personnel and used them to give added value to all students and minimize the effects of overcrowding.

Student attendance is given a high priority. Students describe their school as a safe and caring place, where every lateness and absence triggers a response. They feel supported by their teachers and find the classroom activities enjoyable. They also feel comfortable with the administrators who they see frequently in classrooms and the halls and who know many of the students by name. The effective outreach efforts of the parent coordinator, including a monthly newsletter, is supported by an active parent teacher association and community leaders resulting in good attendance in school sponsored programs. This is especially true of the services and programs in the Montefiore Clinic and the free Montefiore-Mosholou after school program which provides enrichment and homework support for students.

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 school has been successful in hiring and developing staff that are committed to school improvement and the development of the use of data. The administration supports

frequent professional growth opportunities through staff dialog and intra-visitation. Very good use is made of videotaped lessons to share best practice and promote discussion and learning walks are very effectively implemented. Classroom observation is therefore frequent and well established at many levels. These opportunities support the expected teacher accountability for implementing changes and evaluating the results on student understanding. Teachers meet at the beginning of the year, mid-year and end of the year to discuss personal professional goal setting and continual progress.

Distributed leadership practices, including the shared planning and delivery of professional development, creation of grade level materials and common assessments, involvement in the instructional cabinet and school leadership team, monthly mentoring meetings for new teachers and development of staff after school study groups, result in a high degree of involvement distributed across the entire staff. The administration has also developed grade leaders as liaisons to assist in decision making and to facilitate feedback between teachers and administrators.

Weekly grade meetings are alternately facilitated by the mathematics and English language arts coaches and are described by teachers as very focused and helpful. Collaboration is evident in the development of curriculum, projects, the school-developed character education program, discussions around the Teachers ' College writing program, the piloting of a school wide enrichment program and in coordinating supports for specific students. There are plans for creating even more common planning opportunities by aligning lunch periods.

The principal is viewed by her staff as an effective and respectful school and instructional leader who is fully focused on setting and maintaining high standards for all. The school runs smoothly and procedures are well understood. Administrators are very aware of the need to be vigilant in ensuring high standards of behaviour given the overcrowding in the school. The school is calm, orderly and conducive to learning.

The principal is also recognized for her ability to capitalize on the development of outside resources to enhance student performance. This includes a wide range of partnerships such as the links with museums; the Bronx Zoo and Botanical Gardens; Project Arts to develop the Caribbean Cultural Center; New York Cares to improve the school grounds; and links with universities and colleges for student teachers and internships.

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 school has well-established structures and systems for evaluating student progress throughout the year. It uses the results of this evaluation very effectively to make interventions during the course of the year and to plan for the future. The cabinet takes a lead in the process by reviewing the Comprehensive Education Plan and aligning instructional goals. They review and discuss interim assessments in item analysis as well as from teacher observation.

Planning, setting and evaluating goals for individuals, teams, grades and the school is a routine part of the school's practice. This takes place in regular meetings of grade teams, coaches, the instructional support team, academic intervention team and the school

leadership team. The focus of continual attention pervades the interactions around assessing and supporting the progress of individual students, classes, and identified groups of students. The planning processes concerning students and instruction are well developed and timely. The grade-level meetings especially reflect this, for example establishing and reflecting on clear and realistic expectations based on in depth study of best and least developed student work. The effective focus on individuals and evidence of the resulting flexibility were well illustrated in the case study discussion. The result was the immediate implementation of a recommended change in the support program for the struggling student. A further example of the flexible response of the school is the monthly monitoring of incident and accident graphs to determine what is working and what is in need of further improvement. The professional development plan is also flexible and evolves as teacher needs are assessed.

The June planning process is reflective. Teachers look at student work and the beginning, mid and end of year assessments to monitor progress and look ahead for the following year. Based on the results of data assessment the senior leadership team and administration make decisions about the coming year.

The school's own self evaluation is thorough and demonstrates the capacity for further improvement in an already well-developed school.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Briggs Avenue Academy (PS 008)	∅	✓	+
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