



**NYCDOE**

**Quality Review: Final Report**

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



# **Quality Review Report**

**The Belmont School**

**Public School 032**

**690 East 183 Street  
Bronx  
NY 10458**

**Principal: Esther Schwartz**

**Dates of review: March 14 - 16, 2007**

**Reviewer: Clive Parsons**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The Belmont School is housed in a building that is over 100 hundred years old and a relatively new mini school that is physically separate, but on the same site. There are 844 students enrolled across grades kindergarten through 5. Approximately 68% of students are Hispanic, 28% are Black, 3% are White and just over 1% are Asian or other ethnic backgrounds. Just over 20% of students are English language learners, a proportion that is above other schools across the City, although below that in similar schools. Eighteen percent are special education students, a higher proportion than in similar schools and schools across the City. The school receives Title 1 funding. Student attendance is 91.4% and was the same as in similar schools in 2005.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The school is an effective learning community for staff, students and families.
- The principal is a very skilled leader who disperses accountability and leadership widely, which ensures the capacity of the school to continue to grow.
- The school's culture and climate are caring, supportive and nurturing for staff and students, with high expectations and rigor that enable them to make good progress.
- Teachers collect and use data well in meeting students' needs and strong collaboration ensures consistency and reliability in the assessments made.
- Professional development for staff is differentiated, well-planned and its impact for students is monitored and evaluated carefully.
- The school is adept at evaluating progress towards its goals and flexibly modifying direction if the evidence shows this to be required.
- High expectations translate well into the goals established and very effective communication ensures that they drive the work of the whole school community.
- There are effective strategies for identifying students at risk and the interventions made are successful in ensuring that all students make good academic and personal growth.
- Partnerships with external organizations are effective in supporting student progress and providing a range of additional opportunities.
- Students value the wide range of opportunities provided for them during and outside of the school day and the celebration of their work builds self esteem and confidence.

### What the school needs to improve

- Continue to develop teachers' questioning techniques to support the development of students' higher order skills..
- Continue to develop the effectiveness of written feedback from teachers to help students in making the next steps in their learning
- Continue to increase the use of technology to support learning.
- Formalize the setting of short-term, interim goals to support the evaluation of progress towards longer term goals.
- Continue to refine assessment, recording and tracking systems so that they are more easily utilized and more informative for users.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

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

Much attention has been paid to the collection, analysis and evaluation of data over the past few years. The school's reflective and evaluative culture has ensured that the data collected is appropriate and pertinent. The principal's strategic leadership has ensured that data is also analyzed and evaluated so that it drives all aspects of the school's work. Consequently, data is understood and used well. This includes teachers using data to differentiate their instruction, as well as the school leadership using it effectively to identify strengths and development areas. Resulting goals and plans, for students and the school as a whole, are well directed and focused.. The principal has also ensured a supportive and nurturing climate within the school, which complements well the high expectations and rigor found throughout its work. The school is an effective learning community for all, staff, students and families..

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

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

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

A good balance of diagnostic tests, together with interim and teacher generated assessments are used to develop an overall view of students' performance and progress. This ensures that a regularly updated picture is available for individual students, classes and grades. Evidence is usefully collated in student portfolios and teachers' binders. The administration work well to ensure that the data available is analyzed and presentedn a way that is useful and meaningful, so that teachers are able to understand and use it effectively. Teachers collect and use a range of data and information which enables them to meet the needs of students effectively. Strong collaboration between staff, including the use of criteria and checklists to review students' work, ensures that the assessments made are consistent and reliable. The performance of the relatively high proportions of English language learners and special education students is tracked and evaluated to ensure that they are making good progress. Effective strategies are in place to identify and track those students at risk of not making sufficient progress.

Comparisons within the data are used when analyzing performance. The school evaluates the performance of key groups, including boys and girls and ethnic groups, when evaluating State and City tests and reviewing the annual school report. Comparisons are also made with the performance of similar and other local schools. The school's own past performance is another comparison made when evaluating the significant progress made in raising students' achievements. The school has worked hard to ensure that its data systems are informative and useful, and that they drive all goals and plans established. There is a determination to continue to refine the school's assessment, recording and tracking systems to ensure that they remain informative and easily utilized.. For example, the school is looking to see how it might integrate or cross reference data from different assessments in order to build the best profile of a student's achievements and needs.

**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.**

School leaders engage the faculty well in developing goals and plans for the continued improvement of the school. Teachers meet with members of the administration to plan and review their personal goals, as well as those for their students. The Comprehensive Education Plan is the result of much collaborative activity between leaders teachers and parents.. It is based on an appropriate evaluation of the previous plan and the available data. It contains measurable goals which are focused on the needs identified. Teachers establish and monitor individual goals with students. These include shorter term goals related to particular sections of work, as well as longer term goals for the subject area. The school has identified that strengthening further the effectiveness of written feedback from teachers will support students even more effectively in making the next steps in their learning, as well as in taking greater responsibility for doing so. The school is very adept at evaluating progress towards its goals, although interim goals and timeframes are not always formally established as milestones.

The effective strategies in place ensure that students at risk of not making sufficient progress are identified in a timely fashion. The interventions made to support them are successful in ensuring that these students make good academic and personal progress. The number of students requiring intervention diminishes in higher grades as a result of the earlier support they receive. Similarly, English language learners move out of bilingual classes relatively quickly. As with all students, a good knowledge of the individual and their personal needs helps to inform the specific support and guidance provided.

High expectations are translated well into the goals established with students and with teachers. Students know their goals. Goals are effectively communicated to families, who play an active role in the life of the school and are generally supportive of students at home. Workshops and effective support for families help with this process. The school remains determined to increase further the involvement of parents, especially in setting and monitoring student goals. Nevertheless, very effective communication ensures that the school’s plans and goals are known, understood and used to drive the work of all parts 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 curriculum meets mandated requirements and is implemented in ways that meet the broader needs of students. The curriculum is enriched by a wide range of opportunities and experiences provided during and outside of the school day, which students appreciate. This includes art, music dance, and swimming in the school’s own on-site pool. Strong collaboration between staff, within and between grades, ensures consistency and progression in the experiences of students. Teachers are accountable for the quality of their instruction and the outcomes of their students. They use data well to differentiate

their instruction, by grouping and re-grouping students, teaching targeted mini lessons or providing a variety of tasks and expected outcomes. Students are interested, well motivated and engage well in their learning as a result. They make good progress. The school has identified that developing teachers' questioning techniques to support the development of students' higher order skills and increasing further the use of technology are key developments that can strengthen learning further still.

Budgeting, staffing and scheduling are all driven by the needs identified from data and aligned fully with the school's goals and plans. This ensures that all resources are focused on improving student outcomes and that teachers are provided with all the tools to carry through the high expectations governing their work. The school's culture and climate are caring, supportive and nurturing. There are many happy faces and much laughter, both in classrooms and corridors. Coupled with high expectations and rigor, this highly supportive environment encourages students in making good progress. The celebration of students and their work is highly motivating and central to building their self esteem and confidence. Students confirm that they have many adults in the school to whom they would turn, should a need arise. Student attendance is a high priority and has risen over the past few years as a result. High attendance is recognized and celebrated. Weaker attendance is targeted energetically and attendance trends and patterns are reviewed carefully when tracking student progress.

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

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

Teachers new to the school are carefully selected to ensure that they will fit into the culture of the school and bring some additional expertise to its work. This, coupled with effective professional development and the well established systems and structures within the school, has ensured that the large number of new teachers this year has been absorbed successfully. There is much high quality, cooperative activity. Professional development is differentiated, well-planned and its impact on student achievement is monitored and evaluated carefully. The school's instructional team support teachers well and are routinely in classrooms. There is much rigorous self- and peer-evaluation as teachers strive to provide the best possible practice for students. The principal's ability to fit staff perfectly to roles allows them to exploit fully their capabilities, which adds to the sense of success and achievement.

The principal is a very effective leader. She disperses leadership widely throughout the school team, including students. With the accountability attributed to this responsibility, she ensures the capacity of the school to continue to grow. The school runs very smoothly as all know and accept the expectations and requirements. The principal is, justifiably, highly regarded by all. A grant from the Robin Hood Foundation has supported an extremely attractive and well used library resource center. The partnership with Morgan Stanley has supported student progress well and provided a good range of additional opportunities. The school's two choruses have performed at a range of venues, providing wonderful experiences for those involved. Such strong partnerships with external organizations support the school in achieving its academic and personal goals for students.

**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 is very adept at monitoring and evaluating progress towards its goals. The principal knows the school's strengths and development areas very well and this accurate analysis drives the school forward consistently and coherently. The Comprehensive Education Plan is routinely reviewed, for example during bi-monthly meetings of the leadership team. Interim evaluations are used to ensure that plans are working as intended. A thorough review of the data available is at the heart of such reviews. This includes student achievement data, as well as information from learning walks and walkthroughs. Sometimes modifications are made as a result of this process. At other times more extensive change is carried through. The school's use of academic interventions is a good example of refinement and change to ensure maximum impact for students.

Interim and diagnostic assessments for students are also used well to evaluate individual and class progress, so that initial goals are revisited. Where gaps are identified, students are grouped or re-grouped for differentiated instruction. Where progress is less than anticipated changes are made to programs. Professional development is targeted well at identified needs and supports the goals established. When goals are achieved, new ones are established. Teachers' own goals are reviewed and evaluated with the administration. New plans are built carefully upon the outcomes of the previous plans. Each successive plan shows flexible and agile realignment of energy as well as resources. Plans are constantly focused and refocused on meeting student needs and raising their achievements further.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: Belmont School (PS 032)</b>	∅	✓	+
<b>Quality Score</b>			<b>X</b>

<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>			<b>X</b>
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>			<b>X</b>
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>			<b>X</b>
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.			<b>X</b>
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>			<b>X</b>

\* 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.			<b>X</b>
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.			<b>X</b>
2.3 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.			<b>X</b>
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.			<b>X</b>
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.			<b>X</b>
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>			<b>X</b>

<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>	∅	✓	+
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