



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

The Benjamin Franklin School

Elementary School 157

**850 Kent Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11205**

Principal: Maribel Torres

Dates of review: May 15-16, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Anita Skop

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Benjamin Franklin School is an elementary school with 358 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 16% Black, 83% Hispanic and 1% White students. The student body includes 31% English language learners and 23% special education students. Boys account for 58% of the students enrolled and girls account for 42%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 93.7%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 100% eligibility.

The school, which is housed in a 100-year old building, shares space with an upper elementary charter school that occupies the top floor. The principal was appointed to the school in September 2007.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal, supported by the assistant principal and all of the staff, has created a culture of improved student achievement and high expectations.
- The entire school community is committed to the vision of the principal and to promoting student academic success.
- Parents see the school as an inclusive environment which invites them to serve as equal partners in their children's education.
- The school uses a wide range of data, collected in a school-wide profile, very well to evaluate and assess student progress on an ongoing basis.
- The curriculum is adeptly enhanced and adjusted to respond to assessments of student needs in reaching defined school wide goals.
- Extensive professional development, effectively targeted to improving teacher capacity and student achievement, is part of the school culture.
- The school has developed a series of collaborations with similar and peer schools that enables it to share and benefit from best practices citywide.
- Protocols are in place, ensuring that the school runs in an orderly manner and consistently addresses the social and academic needs of students.
- All members of the school community work in a highly collaborative and inclusive manner, respectful of family cultural traditions.
- The school has created an exemplary learning environment where students are actively and eagerly engaged in a wide range of school activities.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that school plans for improving student outcomes include measurable interim goals, to enable administration and staff to identify areas of growth and act promptly to address areas of further need.
- Refine and deepen the level of differentiated instruction to support the needs of all students, especially English language learners.
- Empower students to understand the steps needed to reach interim and long-term goals.

Part 3: Main Findings

Progress made since the last review

The school has made good progress in addressing the issues identified in the previous Quality Review report.

Overall Evaluation

This school is well developed.

The Benjamin Franklin School has demonstrated consistent growth under the leadership of the principal, who was appointed in September 2007. The school culture has actively embraced the use of data as a means of measuring and improving student achievement. Consistent progress has been made throughout the school on both summative New York State assessments and formative school-based assessments in English language arts and math. Professional development on the use of data, a recommendation for improvement in last year's review, has been extensively addressed. The school culture benefits from unique collaborative partnerships with similar schools throughout the city, facilitating the sharing of innovative, successful instructional practices.

The school's inquiry team has undertaken a study of sixteen grade 4 and 5 students with a focus on English language arts comprehension, as aligned with a school-wide improvement goal. Findings from this study have indicated the need for greater vocabulary, idiom and figurative language support for all students. This instructional need has been addressed through a range of grade-level thematic studies and additional English language learner support services. While the administration and teachers jointly reflect on interim goals and frequently analyze data to measure student progress, the lack of measurable, clearly-defined interim goals for all students hinders progress and prevents students from actively charting their own progress. It also limits the information available to inform strategic planning and decision making. Differentiation of instruction, particularly for English language learners, is another focus the school is still working to improve.

The vision of student success and school improvement is shared with all stakeholders. These high expectations have led to the implementation of a wide range of enrichment programs and cultural partnerships, many of which address the gender issues and needs of high-achieving students, targeted in last year's Quality Review. Under this administration, the school has developed an inclusive and welcoming tone that respects all constituencies. Cultural celebrations and an in-depth understanding of family traditions serve to enhance parental involvement in the school community and make parents and teachers allies in their commitment to student success.

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 the student's progress over time.](#)

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

The school has highly effective structures in place to gather data on the performance and progress of each student, class and grade. This provides the principal and staff with a detailed understanding of student growth and achievement. Data is compiled into a

school-wide database which allows the school to chart the progress of students longitudinally. Monthly submissions to the school database include formative class data such as Fountas and Pinnell reading level, Everyday Math unit tests, and lower-grade DIBELS assessments. Periodic assessment data from Acuity is also used to identify skills needs to support student progress. English language learners, who make up almost one-third of the school population, are also evaluated through the school-wide protocols as well as with summative data from the NYSESLAT examination, and serviced through in-school and after-school support programs that address their targeted needs. Special needs students participate in all diagnostic assessments with modifications as determined by their individual educational plans.

By carefully disaggregating the data from the school database, the administration and faculty are able to successfully identify and target gender and ethnic specific instructional priorities. This use of data helped the school to address the gender gap in grade 5 girls through extensive professional development for teachers. The school also uses its database and State and City longitudinal data to carefully review its progress year by year, focusing on grade, class and student performance across all subject areas. Through extensive analysis of data from similar and peer schools, and partnerships with these schools, the school has been able to benefit from innovative methodologies and improve student achievement. Ongoing, targeted and differentiated professional development in data analysis and application to address school, grade and teacher specific needs enables the school to use data in a highly effective manner.

[Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student’s next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each student’s learning.](#)

This area of the school’s work is well developed.

The school maintains well-established and highly collaborative goal-setting practices. The principal regularly meets individually, and grade-by-grade with all teachers to reflect on student outcomes, set new goals and determine future needs to support student success. Monthly reflections on student progress, based on information from the school database, target trends and focus areas for in-depth concentration. Progress monitoring, a component of the Reading First program, assists teachers in setting measurable interim goals for students in kindergarten through grade 3. School-wide target groups, such as English language learners and fifth grade girls, are carefully monitored to ensure student growth is achieved. Special education students participate in all programs and, as such, are equally rigorously monitored to ensure that their individual educational program goals are met. However, not all students are aware of their individual goals and what they need to do to achieve them.

School-wide goals are clearly defined and shared with all constituencies. Instructional and administrative teams meet regularly and monitor student progress toward school, grade, class and individual student goals. Faculty conferences, grade meetings and parent workshops all focus on school-wide goals and student progress. Parents receive monthly progress reports apprising them of their children’s goals and areas in need of improvement. Parents appreciate the school culture which enables them to communicate easily with the staff, and value the school’s high expectations for their children. This strong sense of mutual purpose, clearly defined goals and openness is a hallmark of this administration.

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.

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

The school consistently aligns its curriculum, strategic decisions and resources with targeted school-wide goals. The Reading First program in kindergarten through grade 3, which provides a strong phonemic foundation for emergent readers, was enhanced with thematic units of study and extensive, read-aloud materials to address the school-wide focus on increased comprehension. Balanced literacy in grades 4 and 5 was equally enhanced with increased figurative language and vocabulary support as a result of inquiry team findings. The Everyday Math program, an inquiry-based approach to learning, has shown marked success, and a partnership with the Brooklyn Council for the Urban Environment has provided students with hands-on science experiences that take them beyond classroom study. Students also benefit from access to the arts provided by a licensed art specialist and various music and arts partnerships and grants. Teachers work hard to make their lessons relevant and engaging, though differentiation of instruction to meet the needs of all students, especially English language learners, is not as yet consistently implemented.

All budgetary decisions reflect a commitment to improved student achievement and defined school-wide goals. English language learners are well supported by a bilingual guidance counselor, and small class size is a priority. Teachers are supplied with an extensive range of classroom materials and classroom libraries are stocked with an array of levelled and genre-specific books. Teachers openly work collaboratively with administrators and other teachers. There is an exemplary atmosphere of trust and support throughout the entire school community. Students and staff clearly demonstrate respect and concern for each other. Parents are seen as welcome partners and cultural traditions are honored and respected.

Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

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

Professional development is embedded into the culture of the school. New teachers are provided with mentors as well as ongoing support from the literacy and math coaches, grade-level colleagues and the administration. Teachers strongly support each other through intervisitations and collaborative planning on a continuous basis. All members of the school community contribute to the resource menu, sharing skills and planning projects across grades with parents, thus reflecting the school's inclusive environment. In alignment with the school-wide focus on data, and to address needs cited in the previous Quality Review, extensive professional development has been targeted to all forms of student assessment and to the implementation of periodic assessments. Effective professional development to support the Reading First program has been ongoing and has made the school a citywide model for the program. Consultants have also successfully helped improve teacher capacity in raising student achievement through a wide range of in-house and off-site workshops. Partnerships with similar and peer schools have provided additional sources of professional development growth through intervisitations and shared training opportunities. The administration encourages and supports teachers to attend workshops that build capacity, and asks them to share their knowledge through turnkey sessions that enhance the learning of other faculty members. Cultural institutions that provide a wide range of valuable enrichment opportunities for students also provide

opportunities for teachers through useful workshops and mentorships. Parent needs are also addressed well through workshops that build parent capacity in helping their children to reach personal and school-wide academic goals.

Well-established and effective protocols are consistently implemented so the school runs very smoothly and behaviour is very good. As a result the school successfully maintains a highly engaging learning environment and has a very low suspension rate.

[Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.](#)

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The principal and the school community have a clear vision for the future of the school which is shared by all constituents. Protocols are in place to set the stage for the growth needed to reach these goals. The faculty meets several times a year in collaborative teams to reflect on student, class, grade and school-wide goals and to plan instruction and support to meet the goals. Periodic assessments are carefully analyzed to ascertain student skills needs and to target instruction to meet those needs. Curriculum is aligned with the school goals, and resources and professional development are focused on these targets.

The school, however, does not have clearly defined, measurable criteria and specifically stated timeframes as a means of assessing success. Similarly, individual students are not aware of their interim and long-term goals and of the benchmark levels they must reach as they journey towards their goals. Measurable interim benchmarks are not clearly delineated on class, grade and school-wide levels to enable the staff and the administration to identify areas of growth and areas of further need. As a result, the school does not have a school-wide, data-driven, targeted approach to modifying instructional practices and providing support in a timely manner so as to improve student achievement. While some programs within the school do have this approach as a structural component, such as progress monitoring in the Reading First program, it is not yet a consistent practice throughout the school.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: The Benjamin Franklin School	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
Quality Score				X	

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

To what extent do school leaders and faculty provide . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
1.1 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of each student, classroom, grade level?					X
1.2 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of special education students?				X	
1.3 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of English language learners?				X	
1.4 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of ethnic groups, gender groups and all other categories of interest to the school?				X	
1.5 a measurement of performance and progress based on the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grades and subject areas?				X	
1.6 a measurement of performance and progress based on comparisons with similar schools?					X
1.7 training, management systems and structures that support teachers in the use of school data to inform planning and instruction and to track the progress of students?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 1				X	

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each students learning.

To what extent do school leaders and faculty . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
2.1 engage in collaborative processes to set rigorous, objectively measurable goals for improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals?				X	
2.2 focus 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 identify and improve the performance and progress of those students in greatest need of improvement?				X	
2.4 share whole school goals with all members of the school community to rigorously improve the performance and progress of students?				X	
2.5 convey consistently high expectations to students and their parents/caregivers?				X	
2.6 regularly provide students and their parents/caregivers with information about the goals set for each student, and about each student's progress and performance, and how they can improve?				X	
2.7 invite and enable parents/caregivers to provide useful information to teachers and the school about the learning needs and capacities of their children?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2				X	

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.

To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
3.1 select core curricular approaches that facilitate and provide meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and focus on raising the achievement of students?				X	
3.2 provide a broad and engaging curriculum, including the arts, to enhance learning both within and outside the school day?					X
3.3 hold teachers accountable for the progress and learning of the students in their charge, for making instruction interesting and compelling, and for creating a positive safe and inclusive learning environment?				X	
3.4 ensure that teachers use school, class and student data to plan for and provide differentiated instruction that meets the specific needs of all the students in their charge?			X		
3.5 make budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions strategically, based on data, to meet the school's academic goals for all students?				X	
3.6 ensure that there is an environment of mutual trust and respect between all staff and students to support personal and academic development?					X
3.7 ensure that there are effective and consistently applied procedures to encourage and monitor student attendance and tardiness?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 3				X	

Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school’s collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.					
To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
4.1 use frequent observations of classroom teaching by the principal and other available information to develop a differentiated strategy for improving the quality of each teacher’s instruction?				X	
4.2 make professional development decisions strategically, based on data, to help meet the improvement goals of students and teachers?				X	
4.3 provide frequent opportunities for teachers to observe each other’s classroom instruction and to meet together in teams to plan, share effective practices, and evaluate one another’s instruction in an open and reflective professional environment?				X	
4.4 develop effective procedures for the induction and support of teachers who are new to the profession or the school?				X	
4.5 align youth development, guidance/advising and other student support services around stated academic and personal development goals?				X	
4.6 consistently implement clear procedures that enable the school to run smoothly and encourage effective student learning, and effectively address discipline related incidents?				X	
4.7 create effective partnerships with outside entities that support the academic and personal growth of the students?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 4					X

Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student’s progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.					
To what extent do . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?			X		
5.2 the school’s plans for improving teacher outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?			X		
5.3 teachers and faculty use periodic assessments and other diagnostic tools to measure the effectiveness of plans and interventions for individual and groups of students in key areas?				X	
5.4 teachers and faculty use the information generated by periodic assessments and other progress measures and comparisons to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals?				X	
5.5 school leaders track the outcomes of periodic assessments and other diagnostic measures and use the results to makes strategic decisions to modify practices to improve student outcomes?			X		
5.6 school leaders and staff use each plan’s interim and final outcomes to drive the next stage of goal setting and improvement planning?			X		
5.7 the principal and school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to effect change?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 5					X

◇	Outstanding
+	Well Developed
✓	Proficient
➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features
Δ	Underdeveloped