



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



# **Quality Review Report**

**Benjamin Banneker**

**Elementary School 256**

**114 Kosciusko Street  
Brooklyn  
NY 11216**

**Principal: Sharyn Hemphill**

**Dates of review: January 14 - 15, 2008**

**Lead Reviewer: Jo Cheadle**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Benjamin Banneker is an elementary school with 424 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 90% Black, 6% Hispanic and 4% other students. The student body includes 5.4% English language learners and 9.1% special education students. Boys account for 45% of the students enrolled and girls account for 55%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 91.1%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 97% eligibility.

The school has four self-contained special education classes.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The vision for what the school should be like is extremely clear and communicated effectively throughout the whole school community.
- The principal and assistant principal are strong leadership partners who encourage rigor and purpose in organization and instruction.
- Leaders' good knowledge of individual students and their needs is supported by their regular and useful analysis of data.
- There is a good core curriculum and a useful range of assessment materials that inform effectively the tracking of student progress.
- The school has a positive learning climate where levels of professional trust are high and open discussion towards improvement is encouraged.
- Leaders make wise financial decisions that positively influence whole school improvements.
- Coaches and consultants support teachers' professional development well and help the school meet its priorities.
- There are very good links with key partners that enhance progress toward development goals.
- Strategic plans to realize the vision for the school's future are well structured and appropriately based on analysis of data.
- The school runs calmly and in good order, supporting a determined focus on improving the quality of education for all students.

### What the school needs to improve

- Fine-tune the analysis and use of data to include all subgroups pertinent to the school population.
- Ensure consistency in setting goals for student learning and ways of sharing goals with students and parents.
- Hold teachers to even greater account for using data to match work to students' specific needs.
- Improve the quality of instruction by providing further opportunities for teachers to share good practice and visit other schools.

## Part 3: Main Findings

### **Progress made since the last review**

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

### **Overall Evaluation**

#### **This school is proficient.**

The leaders of Benjamin Banneker Elementary have a very clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas where improvement is necessary. The principal and her assistant work in close partnership and with a shared vision of how the school should be and what sort of education students deserve. They communicate this vision and expectations of what must change extremely well. Priorities for development are very well structured and there is an atmosphere of purposeful determination to build capacity and drive the school forward. The school has worked through a period of change and has re-established aims for the future. Currently instruction does not consistently meet the full range of student needs and achievement goals for students lack clarity. In addition, the school does not communicate "next step" goals effectively enough to parents to encourage better support for learning at home. The school believes firmly that "children are reason enough" and the attention to their personal and social development, alongside academic achievement, is commendable. Wise use of finances and good opportunities for professional development support the school's long-term goals for improvement well.

The school's inquiry team has made a good start to its work. The group has targeted grade 2 students in danger of holdover for very specific support to ensure rapid progress. There are suitable time scales for the evaluation of this work. The principal has met with parents of these students, explained test requirements for grade 3 and detailed ways that they can support their children at home. She plans to meet with parents again in the spring semester to evaluate progress and discuss the ways in which parents have helped at home.

The school continues to address some areas for improvement noted at the time of the last quality review. While leaders have provided good "in-house" professional development and teachers have had opportunities to work with consultants, there is awareness that teachers do not have enough opportunities to learn from examples of good practice and establish consistent procedures for setting goals for students. However, the school has made good progress in other areas and standards in math, writing and science have improved. Achievement in reading is currently a whole school focus area. Leaders now make greater use of a wider range of data to measure success over time and determine goals for student and teacher outcomes.

## **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 proficient.**

Leaders and faculty have made wider and more effective use of data since the last Quality Review. Leaders talk insightfully with reference to math and reading scores, highlighting successes, improvements over time and areas where there remains room for development. They understand that while some grade groups have fully embraced the process of data analysis and use this information to hone classroom instruction to match student needs, others have yet to do so. Leaders have disaggregated data wisely to show differences in teacher outcomes, between grade groups and for specialized teaching groups. This has led to program changes for English language learners. Over time, leaders have also observed significant differences between boys' and girls' achievement. They have responded by purchasing resources that are of better interest to boys and ensuring that lesson content also matches these interests. Assessments and tests scores are now showing positive improvements and girls and boys results are more even. In general, staff know students' individual needs well. Where teaching is strongest, this information is used to ensure a strong link between learning opportunities and in-depth knowledge of what and how students need to learn. Leaders have yet to make full use of all information available to them for some pertinent sub-groups. Data analysis is not fine-tuned enough for leaders to determine precise goals for whole school developments to improve classroom practice and student learning.

**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 proficient.**

The school has adopted a number of useful assessment tools that enable good analysis of student progress. Using "next step" rubrics for math, reading and writing, teachers are able to devise appropriate goals for learning. Leaders are now establishing collaborative goal setting in grade groups and there are good examples of goals displayed in many classrooms. There are, however, inconsistencies in the setting of student goals. Some students are not aware of what they need to do next to build on their prior achievement. In addition, there are no formalized procedures for sharing goals with parents in order that they can support their children's learning at home. This is contradictory to the school's desire to work closely with parents and contrasts with other procedures in school that enable appropriate parental participation. The school's parent coordinator, for example, works closely with a small group of parents who need help with literacy. The school's Spanish speaking staff are also very supportive of parents who speak only Spanish. In addition, the principal has met with all parents of grade 2 students who are at risk of "holdover". These meetings are not only to discuss support strategies to use at home, but also to reinforce the general importance of parental involvement in learning. This group of students in greatest need is taught via a special literacy program to encourage rapid progress. They have very specific goals and leaders monitor their progress at short intervals. This intensified intervention is an

example of the way in which the school sets high expectations for specific groups. However, the school recognizes that its expectations are not as high for all students.

**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 proficient.**

Leaders have selected good core curriculum programs that are raising achievement in school. A balanced literacy program, based on the reading and writing workshop model, is providing effective, structured instruction with clear rubrics for assessing student progress and achievement. Likewise, the Everyday Math program is facilitating regular assessment of outcomes and analysis of gaps in learning. Both programs support the school’s improvement plans for raising achievement. In addition, leaders have made wise financial decisions to enhance the science program by appointing a second science teacher for the upper grades. The focus on extended practical activities has excited students and engaged them more in their learning. The extended curriculum includes a good program for art. There are many very interesting and high quality three-dimensional models all around school and attractive displays of students’ work in corridors. A professional musician teaches music in two grade groups and the leaders are seeking grant support to enhance the music program further. Gym and health education sessions include Tai Chi. There are plans to enhance the physical education curriculum further with the addition of tennis coaching.

Leaders have wisely opted to move teachers between grades to ensure that there is full understanding of age-related standards throughout the school. Additionally, all intervention staff are now supporting students in classrooms rather than through “pull out” sessions. Change has induced a “settling in” period, but also enabled leaders to establish strengths in solid, transferable teaching skills across the school as well as areas for development. As a result, the major improvement push is to ensure that teachers consistently make effective use of all relevant information to plan learning that matches students’ specific needs exactly. In the words of the principal, “We have to give them the best – do right by our babies”.

**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.**

School leaders are very aware of faculty strengths and areas where improvements are necessary. The principal visits classrooms every day, talks to students about their learning and asks teachers questions regarding work on display. She praises what is good and, in an informal and supportive way, suggests how things might be better. Alongside formal observations, these daily visits form the main body of knowledge about how well students and teachers are doing. From this information, leaders plan whole school and individualized professional development opportunities. School-based coaches are very involved in this process and support new teachers particularly well. New teachers commented that coaches had helped them with ideas on how to

differentiate work to meet specific needs. The assistant principal and internal mentors also provide invaluable support and practical advice that enables new teachers, and other members of staff, to gain confidence and give of their best. Professional development and training is enhanced further by useful and successful partnerships with external consultants. There are opportunities for grade groups to work closely with each other, developing in depth understanding of age-relative expectations. So far this has involved only pre-kindergarten and kindergarten and grades 2 and 3 and there are too few opportunities for staff to learn through observing and discussing good practice more generally. However there are suitable plans to remedy this by extending cross-grade liaison and including intra-school visitations in the program of professional development.

**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 well developed.**

In response to the findings of the last Quality Review, the school now regularly and rigorously monitors student progress, revising action plans in line with measured success. Through analysis of data, leaders have established three top priorities for the coming year. These focus on progress in reading, differentiation of instruction and writing in math to reach state standards. The school cabinet, the professional development team and the school leadership team have scheduled opportunities to monitor and evaluate progress in each of these areas. Using this information, they adapt and amend plans to ensure that processes and procedures all support successful outcomes. In monitoring, evaluation and action planning, leaders make careful consideration of a growing range of useful assessment information to measure student and teacher outcomes. Teachers understand the importance of regularly collecting data that shows student progress and recognize that, when data shows that progress is limited, there are implications for classroom practice. However, while many have responded well and improved the way they match work to student needs in their classrooms, this practice is not yet consistent throughout the school. Leaders effectively use monitoring information to devise strategic plans for whole school development and amend existing plans to ensure good outcomes. There are very well structured action plans for all core subjects, the arts curriculum, the program for English language learners, student support services, intervention and other aspects of the school's work. These plans clearly indicate success criteria, strategies to get from "here to there" and timeframes for outcomes. These processes indicate that the school has an extremely clear vision of how it will be in the future and the ways in which it will realize this vision.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

|                                       |   |   |   |   |   |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| <b>SCHOOL NAME: Benjamin Banneker</b> | Δ | ▷ | ✓ | + | ◇ |
| <b>Quality Score</b>                  |   |   | 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 |   |   |
| <b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>  |   |   | 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 demanding, 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 |   |   |
| <b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>  |   |   | 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?   |   |   | X |   |   |
| <b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>   |   |   | X |   |   |

| <b>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.</b>                |          |          |          |          |          |
|--|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| <b>To what extent does the school . . .</b>  | <b>Δ</b> | <b>➤</b> | <b>✓</b> | <b>+</b> | <b>◇</b> |
| 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?   |          |          |          | X        |          |
| 4.7 create effective partnerships with outside entities that support the academic and personal growth of the students?   |          |          |          | X        |          |
| <b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>   |          |          |          |          | X        |

| <b>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.</b> |          |          |          |          |          |
|--|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| <b>To what extent do . . .</b>   | <b>Δ</b> | <b>➤</b> | <b>✓</b> | <b>+</b> | <b>◇</b> |
| 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        |
| <b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>   |          |          |          |          | X        |

|   |  |
|---|--|
| ◇ | <b>Outstanding</b>                             |
| + | <b>Well Developed</b>                          |
| ✓ | <b>Proficient</b>                              |
| ➤ | <b>Underdeveloped with Proficient Features</b> |
| Δ | <b>Underdeveloped</b>                          |