



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

The John L Bernstein School

Elementary School 137

**293 East Broadway
New York
NY 10002**

Principal: Melissa Rodriguez

Dates of review: April 28 - 29, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Daniella Phillips

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The John L. Bernstein School is an elementary school with 228 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 31% Black, 60% Hispanic, 1% White, and 8% Asian students. The student body includes 15% English language learners and 27% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 91.7%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 78% eligibility.

The school moved out of its original building nearly two years ago and now shares space with the Henrietta Szold School Public School 134, another elementary school. Since that move, enrolment has declined from 394 students to 228 presently.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal has a clear vision for future development of the school and takes deliberate, thoughtful steps to implement change.
- There is a high degree of mutual trust and respect among staff and students that leads to a positive learning environment.
- Teachers meet and collaborate regularly in their instructional planning to share best practices.
- The school uses a good range of data collection systems to understand what students know and can do.
- Benchmarks have been developed that align with State standards and drive curriculum mapping and assessments.
- Care is taken to match professional development of staff with major priorities for school-wide improvement of learning.
- Budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions are made effectively to further academic goals for all students.
- The principal models an innovative conferring approach to monitor and improve daily teaching practice.
- The school seeks to inform parents of their child's academic progress through several good initiatives this year.

What the school needs to improve

- Analyze data of sub-groups, such as English language learners, by gender and ethnicity, in order to detect and address patterns in their achievement.
- Set sufficiently high expectations for students and differentiate teaching practice to push all students in their learning.
- Broaden the range of clubs, activities and enrichment offerings to engage students more in personal and social development.
- Enhance student and whole school goal setting with the introduction of measurable, interim targets and planned times to monitor progress.

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 learning environment at Public School 137 is positive, intimate and collaborative. Teachers and administrators meet regularly for instructional planning. They communicate effectively with parents, both informally and formally, through detailed narrative reports and quarterly report cards. There is good evidence of individual and school goal setting, but the goals sometimes lack measurable targets and timelines for implementation. Struggling students receive careful, focused attention, especially in special education classes. However, the school has yet to disaggregate data for all student sub-groups to gain a detailed and complete picture of overall performance. Largely because of this, the school does not set sufficiently high expectations for all students.

Teachers rely on students' assessment results to guide their instructional decisions, and they work hard to ensure that lessons engage students. The principal provides very timely and effective instructional feedback through "conferring" notes, and teachers take advantage of a rich cycle of professional development facilitated by teacher-leader colleagues and coaches. Budgeting and staffing decisions show good strategic consideration. Families seek a broader range of clubs, activities and enrichment offerings to further students' personal development.

The school has demonstrated some progress since last year's review, especially in developing systems of data collection and sharing, comparisons of student progress over time, and using technology. Other recommendations from the previous review need much greater attention, such as monitoring the impact of school plans, differentiating lesson planning, and tailoring programs for high-achieving students.

The inquiry team focused successfully on struggling readers. To implement change, they lengthened the independent reading time in upper-grade classes. In addition the coaches and administration introduced diversified classroom libraries with books that meet the broader interests of students. The inquiry approach became an important lens for teachers to engage in improving instruction.

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.

The school has strengthened its practice of gathering, analyzing, and using data to understand individual, grade and whole school student achievement. This year the majority of teachers meet regularly to review a broad range of data, including monthly

reading level assessment reports and quarterly benchmark reports in literacy and math. Teachers receive flash drives and pair with an “assessment buddy” colleague for routine support in looking critically at students’ performance and progress. They record and review student data in similar ways across classrooms, which assists in sharing data between grades. However, the school does not systematically identify student progress and achievement by different groups, including English language learners, by ethnicity and gender. Several staff noted informally that the school earned extra credit on the progress report due to improvements made by lower-performing Hispanic students in English language arts. However, there was no analysis of student data to confirm or understand why this had occurred. As a result, the school does not fully address patterns of student achievement. An exception is the school’s careful oversight of special education achievement due to effective collaboration and communication between general and special education teachers.

Technology is used administratively to store and share updated spreadsheets of student data, including comparisons with past performance. Teachers access individual student profiles in planning instruction and writing narratives. A weakness of the current profiles is an over-reliance on measuring student progress with only two possible ratings: “met” or “not met” standards. The school recognizes the need to expand beyond two ratings in tracking student achievement along standards-based benchmarks.

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.

Goal setting occurs most reliably through the narrative reports and student conferences during workshop model lessons. Teachers, administrators, and coaches collaborate in formulating goals, with little student input. A future priority will be developing interim and long-term goals with identified time frames for each student and the whole school, instead of describing strategies for general improvement.

The school does not set sufficiently high expectations for all students. For example, neither attendance nor instruction is carefully monitored in the extended day program, which results in low expectations for targeted student achievement. Next year, the administration intends to match students’ needs with teachers’ strengths by conducting a needs and expertise inventory at the start. Another example is the lack of enrichment programming or challenge assignments for higher achieving students. Furthermore, teachers report via survey and in-person the need for raised academic rigor across all classes as a school-wide goal.

Despite problems with the extended day program, there is good attention focused on the needs of struggling learners during the regular school day. Teachers identify students for instructional support and a knowledgeable team of intervention specialists works with students to address weaknesses.

In seeking to improve parent involvement in their children’s learning, the school has introduced several good initiatives this year. Twice yearly, teachers write detailed narrative accounts of each student’s academic and personal progress with clear goals for further growth. Additionally, the dynamic parent coordinator arranges “Family Friday”

activities each month, which draw dozens of parents into school to see their child's learning progress celebrated in class. Informally and formally, school staff communicates constructively with parents about what and how children learn. Parents reciprocate with relevant information about their child's learning needs and style.

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.

The school implements a suitable core curriculum, and organizes instruction effectively through the workshop model. Data from interim math and English language arts assessments provides staff with meaningful measures of students' progress. In addition, teachers develop benchmarks in literacy and math to ensure that what they teach students to know and do is aligned well to State standards. Teachers follow the Teachers' College approach to reading and writing, with good support from staff developers. Students enjoy broad exposure to art and music within their classes and through engaging arts partners like Lincoln Center, Broadway's Rosie's Kids, and Dancing Classrooms.

Teachers plan interesting lessons and capitalize on small class size to confer regularly with students. A good number of teachers differentiate instruction, especially during the literacy block, by forming strategy groups based on student data. However, a significant minority of teachers struggle with this individualized approach in math, science and other content areas.

This is a small school and the administration and teachers have created a "family" environment where students are well known to all staff. This ensures a very positive culture of respect between teachers and students which then strengthens students' trust in adults for personal and academic support. School leaders make budgeting and programming decisions strategically and thoughtfully to support school programs and initiatives. The school will roll over funds to next school year, as future budget cuts are expected. Procedures for motivating and monitoring student attendance exist, including perfect attendance assemblies, bulletin board displays, and weekly attendance committee meetings. However, this year's 91.3% overall student attendance rate remains lower than last year's 91.7% rate and that of similar schools. Moreover, oversight of student attendance in extended day programs lacks vigilance.

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 proficient.

The administration provides on-going support for teachers to grow professionally through significant consulting resources and multiple common planning opportunities over the course of each week. Teachers meet individually with the principal to develop and monitor professional goals. Modeling an innovative conferring approach, the principal provides classroom teachers with a series of written feedback notes that include

compliments, observations and next steps to improve instruction. Teachers find these frequent conferring notes very constructive in enhancing the quality of their instruction. The school places a strong emphasis on professional development and ensures that it is carefully planned to match with school goals and individual needs. Teachers meet and collaborate regularly in their instructional planning to good effect, as grade-level colleagues adhere to curriculum maps. Nearly half of all teachers at the school have taught for 10 or more years, and the administration nurtures teacher leadership to facilitate in-house lab site visits and workshops. School leaders also recognize the need to arrange additional inter-visitations outside of school to see exemplary practices, especially in math.

Students, parents, and teachers describe the school as inviting and orderly, with clear systems and accessible counseling that support a positive learning environment. A majority of students participates in the University Settlement and Virtual Y after-school programs, and these are successful school partnerships. At the same time, there are no sports intramural teams, chess club, peer mediation and student council, among many other potential activities, to engage students more in social and emotional areas of their personal development. Several pro-active students, with full encouragement of adults, seek to organize a newspaper and spirit week. But this points to an overall dearth of clubs, activities and enrichment offerings during and after the school day.

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 underdeveloped with proficient features.

School leaders identify problem areas by analyzing student achievement data and they take steps to try to address the issue. However, there are not always set targets or timeframes for gauging improvement, so it becomes difficult to measure the effectiveness of the school's plans. For example, the school recognizes that students struggle with non-fiction literature based on results from periodic assessments and teacher observations. To improve student outcomes, the school has implemented a computer-based program, known as the Scholastic's Read About program, to support groups of students with reading comprehension of non-fiction text. At this time, the school has not yet set expected targets or tracked cycles of students' outcomes using this program. Therefore, the school misses an opportunity to evaluate the plan's effectiveness or make immediate adjustments to accelerate student gains. Similarly, the Comprehensive Education Plan offers good overall direction for the school's development, but it lacks measurable goals and timelines for implementation. In practice, teachers, parents, and students speak far more comfortably about reading goals and periodic assessment results than they do about math, writing and other subjects. Therefore, there is less consistency in how math and writing instructional plans and interventions are reviewed and amended.

Teachers and parents describe the third-year principal as "open" and "a learner herself." There is good confidence and trust in the shared vision of the school community for the future growth of the school. Through deliberate, collaborative steps, the principal has made communal priorities of the collection and application of student achievement data to instructional planning. These priorities are at the heart of professional development, resource and staffing decisions and communication with families.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: The John L Bernstein 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